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THE  
CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
AND  
RECENT RELIGIOUS THOUGHT



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THE  
CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
AND  
RECENT RELIGIOUS THOUGHT

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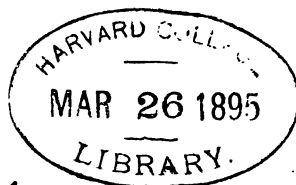
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**Dedicated**

TO

**CHARLES BULLER HEBERDEN, M.A.**

**PRINCIPAL OF BRASENOSE COLLEGE.**



## PREFACE

IN the following pages an attempt is made to estimate the position of the Church of England in relation to recent religious thought, this latter being understood in a large sense, as including not merely professional theology but also the opinions of men in general on religious subjects.

The work is divided into four parts, each of which is intended to expand the scope of the inquiry from within outwards. Thus, in the first part, the Church's *internal* state is discussed. This leads to the consideration (2) of the Dissenters and (3) of the Alienated Classes, as following next after each other in the order of their separation from the Church of England. Finally, (4) the catholic claims of the Church are examined, no longer as regards persons or classes, but as regards the intrinsic capacity for universality of the contributions recently made to the Church's theology.

The author's main concern has throughout been with those tendencies of religious thought which, though by no means universal in the Church of England, are, or seem likely to become, predominant. It

is necessary that this should be borne in mind, since otherwise the principle of selection which has been followed as regards the subjects discussed might not be apparent. Let it be understood then that what is here attempted is, not to provide the reader with a *vade mecum* of all the various forms which religious thought in the Church of England has recently assumed, but rather—starting from the hypothesis of the Church's increased and increasing specialisation of herself in one direction—an hypothesis which in the first part of this work is vindicated—to show in what the religious thought of the Church—as thus determined—consists, and at the same time to show how the Church's position—as thus determined—is modified by external circumstances. The present attempt is therefore not an exhaustive survey, but is rather to be regarded as a work of constructive criticism, by which what is meant, in reference to its subject, is that it aims at giving a consistent and intelligible account of the underlying basis, the governing purposes, and the reflexive movements of the contemporary Church of England.

As regards its practical object, this book has been written in order to exhibit the wider possibilities of development now opening up before the Church of England, together with the helps and hindrances to their realisation. That in conceiving of these latter the author should find himself alternately at issue, and in agreement, with prevailing tendencies, arises from his view of the Church of England as at once reactionary and progressive, the first, owing to certain traditions inherited from the Oxford Movement and since further elaborated in the same

sense ; the second, owing to the influences of the Church and the National Life affecting each other reciprocally. Looking then to these two opposite characteristics (the attempt to *combine* which is what really constitutes that specialisation of the Church in one direction spoken of above) the author's judgment follows two different impulses, according as he contemplates the one or the other of them.

It is not, however, in connection with the Church's mutually exclusive aims that "the wider possibilities of development," referred to in the last paragraph, were intended to be understood. For though the author believes that the Church's attempted combination of these aims is at present more or less a failure, he believes also that ultimately it will be a success and the signs of progress which he discerns are interpreted by him as pointing in that direction. More than this, the author's calculations are broad enough to admit of his hopes for the Church being realised, even should this not be by the path which he personally would have preferred. Hence, his purpose as fully developed, so far from being a controversial one, is really directed to show that the now dominant tendencies of English Churchmanship *may* be destined, to whatever extent, to triumph, and yet, in the course of working themselves out, may transcend the associations of their origin, and may acquire a truly catholic character in exchange for their present mere pseudo-catholicity.



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## PART I

### THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND TO-DAY

“Soll man . . . annehmen dass veraltete Bildungsmotive ohne positive Veranlassung und willkürlich in eine ganz anders angelegte Entwicklung hineinbrechen, sie verwirren und verderben, wie kann man dann der pessimistischen Ansicht von der Menschheit sich entziehen, welche die schleteste Disposition zur Besserung verfahrenere Zustände ist?”—*Ritschl on Schleiermacher*, p. 89.





# THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

AND

## RECENT RELIGIOUS THOUGHT

### CHAPTER I

#### GROWTH OF A SPIRIT OF UNIFORMITY

IT has frequently of late been asserted that the old party divisions of the Church of England are now breaking down, and this amalgamation of Church parties is by some regarded as one of the most hopeful signs of the times. As to this latter point opinions may differ according as the nature of the situation is variously estimated. But as to the existence of the alleged fact—viewed simply as a fact—there can, we think, be no doubt. It seems to us unquestionable that there has been of late years in the Church of England a drawing together of factions previously hostile, a mitigation in the intensity and bitterness of party strife, and, in short, a general tendency (however it may be explained) towards peace and goodwill.

But when we come to inquire into the explanation of this fact, there is, as we have hinted, great room for differences of opinion. Thus, we might explain

the fact as due merely to the general progress of society which tends to produce a spirit favourable to toleration not merely amongst members of the Church of England, but more or less amongst all persons and classes of the community. Or again, looked at less generally, this result might be referred to a conviction arrived at by Church parties in common of the smallness of the differences dividing them from each other, and to a consequent determination to forego such differences and to fall back on the admitted essentials of Christian belief and practice, instead of fighting over minor points of detail. Or lastly, it might be said that the true explanation of the fact in question was to be found in the growing supremacy of some one party in the Church which had by degrees spread itself over the rest and had thus obtained peace on a basis, not of mutual concession, but of submission to its own terms.

Perhaps, however, we shall be in a better position to explain this fact if we state somewhat more at length what we mean by it. For it is not merely to the growth of toleration, but to the existence of a spirit of *uniformity*, in the Church of England that we wish now to draw attention. The Church of England is in fact becoming more and more a homogeneous whole. In some ages, the chief feature of that Church, as of other Churches, has been variation, disunion, want of permanence and consistency. Such a period we seem to have passed through during the last half-century and to be only just now reaching its close, as shown by the tendency above referred to. In other ages there has been in this Church, as likewise at times in all Churches which have had a history, a tendency towards sameness and likeness amongst the parts which constitute it rather than towards difference. It is this latter condition of uniformity which we predicate of the Church of England in its most recent development. Let us then, before proceeding further, endeavour, as briefly

as possible, to indicate some of the more superficial characteristics of the state of things which has thus arisen, leaving those which lie deeper to be inquired into later.

We would instance, in the first place, the uniformity of thought and behaviour which prevails amongst the Anglican clergy. Never before surely were such a large body of educated men so like each other in their general tone, whether as illustrated by their public ministrations—their preaching and teaching—or by their demeanour and conversation in private life. Nor is it the clergy only who are distinguished by this spirit of uniformity. The faithful laity, too, are every year becoming more and more like each other in all that part of their lives which concerns the obligations of religion—more and more a common stamp is being impressed upon them, and types are arising as out of a common Church life. We have now amongst the laity Church-workers and helpers in every variety, both amateur and professional; women without stint, and in our large towns not a few men, especially young men; besides whom there is the rapidly increasing class of lay readers, mission sisters, and other persons engaged in similar work, together with the staffs of heads and assistants required in order to maintain in existence the orphanages and other eleemosynary institutions which are in so many places now springing up at the Church's call. The same activity has shown itself in the multiplication of churches and in the increased attention paid to church music and singing. All these phenomena bear witness to the same tendency, and produce on the mind the same general impression—an impression the chief element in which is a growing sense of the conformity of the Church of England with a single, uniform, ecclesiastical type.

We are quite aware that there are many exceptions to this general tendency, and that the phenomena we

have adduced, and others which we shall adduce in illustration of it, still admit of being regarded rather as the property of a party in the Church than of the Church as a whole. None the less, however, the tendency we have indicated is the most characteristic feature of the Church of England at the present time ; this is the point which the Church is making for, or towards which she is being driven. Everywhere where the Church of England is strongest and most influential we find evidence of this inclination ; this, too, is the character of the most representative Churchmen, whether clergy or laity. Such being the case, it is no fair objection to urge that this state of things is not universal in the Church of England ; we must judge institutions, as we do persons, by reference to their most salient features, and to what is most characteristic about them, not by a microscopic survey of the whole sphere of their activity.

Yet it is no doubt quite true that the tendency of which we speak *originated* with a party in the Church of England, a party by whose agency it slowly spread itself until it assumed its present proportions. In other words, the explanation of this tendency which we prefer is the *third* of those mentioned above, which is not, however, inconsistent with the first. According to this view, the uniformity characteristic of the Church's present state is ascribed to "the supremacy of a single party which has obtained peace on a basis, not of mutual concession, but of submission to its own terms."

This statement of the case is, however, so far unsatisfactory as that it conveys the idea that the High Church Party (for that of course is the party in question) did not itself undergo a transformation in the process of transforming the Church of England. Such an idea would involve a misconception. It may be, and, according to the view here adopted, is the fact that that party did not make concessions to other parties, but it does not follow that it did not absorb

and assimilate the characteristics of other parties and in so doing become changed itself.

Now, the origin of this tendency towards uniformity in the Church of England may be traced back to the Oxford Movement. The very mention of this latter is beginning to create a certain sense of *ennui* owing to the multitude of personal reminiscences, anecdotes, discussions and controversies which are associated with it. Nothing in fact but the great ability and attractiveness of the writers who have handled this subject could have obtained for them the patient hearing on the part of the non-ecclesiastical public which as a matter of fact has been accorded to them. Not that the nature of the subject would not have amply justified this willing attention, if the chief authorities on the Oxford Movement had not confined themselves so exclusively to its first beginnings and had traced it—as after this lapse of time they might surely some of them have done—throughout its whole course. Instead of this, what we have had has been an immense amount of interesting information about the originators of the movement and about its earlier phases. The result has been the acquisition of much valuable material for the purposes of ecclesiastical history, and the exhibition, in not a few cases, of a most finished literary style. We ought, therefore, perhaps not to complain. At the same time, it must be remembered that since the first dawn of the Oxford Movement a period has elapsed of not less than sixty years, and we must be excused if, whilst not ignoring antecedents, we attach some importance also to their consequences. Hence, in considering the Oxford Movement in connection with our present subject, we shall have nothing to say either about Tract XC., or about the different stages of Dr. Newman's career, or about his earlier as compared with his later associates. Nor, indeed, shall we have much to say about the Oxford Movement under any of its more historical aspects.



At the same time, we cannot get rid of the subject altogether. For we must be on our guard against supposing that because the Oxford Movement in its developed form has assumed some manifestations not contemplated by its initiators, it is therefore false to its original principle. As Dr. Newman has himself so well shown, the fact of many and great differences arising is not only not inconsistent with a faithful development, but must necessarily appear under that very condition, though, of course, it may ALSO appear when the true succession has been lost. If then we believe—as we most certainly do—in the continuous development of the Oxford Movement down to the present time, we must have a firm grasp of the principle underlying it throughout its whole course, in virtue of which we speak of it as one throughout.

Now, we find the cause of the Oxford Movement to consist in the wave of reaction, both in religion and in politics, which followed upon the French Revolution, or rather upon the Napoleonic wars which were its outcome. No one who is acquainted with the records of the Oxford Movement in its first origin can fail to see that it was part of this larger movement of reaction which produced analogous, though widely different, results both in France and Germany.<sup>1</sup> Nor has this movement ever since lost its original character. It is only a superficial view to regard it either in its earlier or later stages as directed primarily against Evangelical Protestantism. It was, no doubt, to some extent originally directed against this, but only on account of what this might lead to, not on account of what it actually was. Newman, in effect, was

<sup>1</sup> It has always seemed to the writer that a most interesting study and comparison might be made of the effects of this reaction in England, France, and Germany—when “the world, as that generation dreamed, was to be made young again . . . by an elixir distilled from the withered flowers of mediæval Catholicism and Chivalry.”—Wallace’s *Logic of Hegel*. Editor’s Prolegomena, p. xxx.

always asking the Protestants how they intended to hold their own when their own principle of private judgment was turned against them by men who had not inherited the same traditional beliefs. He was looking forward to a time which has not even yet fully come, though it is every day drawing nearer.

At a later time, however, the Oxford Movement, as is well known, to a certain extent changed its character. It was still inspired by hatred and fear of the rationalistic tendencies of the age. But the successors of the Tractarians gave up Dr. Newman's method, which may be described as consisting in a reasoned defence of authority against reason. They preferred a more direct appeal to the emotions. They invented or reproduced an elaborate Church ceremonial: they inculcated the adoption of many beliefs and practices which were either before quite unknown in England, or which had long since fallen into disuse. In short, from having been first Newmanites and then Puseyites, they became Ritualists. At the same time, while we admit this difference between the originators of the Oxford Movement and their successors, we think that it has been greatly exaggerated. It was a change of form rather than of substance. The change was necessitated not merely because the movement had outgrown the merely academic associations in which it first originated, but also and even more because the strength of the opposing tendencies had increased. The underlying motive was, however, the same throughout. Throughout its whole course the movement has aimed at the suppression of Liberalism or Rationalism (terms which indeed are used by Cardinal Newman synonymously), and in this respect there has been no break in the continuity of its development.

Yet these so-called Ritualists were after all only a PARTY in the Church, nor did they show any great tendency to unite with other Churchmen differing from

themselves. Quite the contrary, indeed. Their influence, so far from being of a unifying and conciliatory character, tended distinctly towards separation and disintegration, and in this latter *rôle* they achieved considerable success and, as we must all remember, attracted much public notice in the newspapers and Law Courts. It was not therefore from this quarter that the tendency towards unity or uniformity was to be expected to proceed. That tendency, however, more and more developed itself in response to the felt needs of the vast populations to whom the Church was now called to minister. This then is the *third* development of the Oxford Movement, the characteristics of which will occupy us throughout the greater part of what follows.

In the present connection it need only be remarked that this development, though based on similar ecclesiastical principles, was yet in other respects very different from the position both of the Tractarians and of the Ritualists. These latter were *parties* in the Church of England; to a certain extent, indeed, the Ritualists have this character still. On the other hand, at this *third* stage the point had been reached when the Oxford Movement was to aim at identifying itself with the Church of England as a whole. We are speaking now more particularly of what has been going on in the Church of England during the last thirty years, and it is to this period of time that the description of the distinguishing features of the Church of England given above is intended chiefly to apply. During this period English Churchmen have become more and more High Churchmen, and the attempt has been made to represent this form of churchmanship as inclusive of all others. The exigencies of practical organisation at this time required that the enthusiasm of the English Church should take some one form, and this was the form which it chose. It was no longer urged that other tendencies opposed to this one were wrong; it was rather said

that Churchmen of all shades of opinion would find here all that they demanded from their own special point of view, together with much more besides. And this way of putting the case was wonderfully successful, as may be seen from the fact that it undermined the position of the other two parties in the Church of England, both of which had previously occupied strong ground of their own. Let us before proceeding further endeavour to show what this ground was, as also how it was gradually invaded.

As regards what is called the Broad Church Party, the best men of this school have always not only professed dislike to the appellation of Broad Church, but have set themselves in opposition to any and every division of the Church into parties, no matter on what basis. Still, the teaching of these men did more or less have in view certain general aims in common, as to which there need be no uncertainty. These aims for our present purpose may be classed under two heads, the one theological and doctrinal, the other more of a social or ethico-social character.

The theological aim amounted to an attempt sometimes to reform, sometimes to revolutionise the traditional teaching of the Church of England on religious subjects. Whether it was the authority of the Bible and the way in which the Bible had been previously understood that was called in question, or whether it was pointed out that the articles and formularies of the Prayer Book had become antiquated, and that some modification therefore was required in the terms of clerical subscription, or whether, lastly, on more general grounds it was represented that dogma was no necessary part of religion, the changes advocated in these and other like directions would, if they had taken root to the extent desired by their propounders, have formed an essentially new departure in the history of English religion and theology. That they did not take root to this extent or anything like it is, we believe, a

simple matter of history. Nor is it difficult to account for the comparative failure of the theologians of this new school ; they went too far for some and not far enough for others ; they did not say clearly what they meant, and, as some held (though in most cases quite wrongly), they did not always mean what they said. And yet they exercised far more effect on the theological teaching of the Church of England than now appears on the surface, and it would not be difficult to show conspicuous traces of their influence in quarters where we should least expect to find any. It is owing to their efforts that the interpretation of scripture has been undertaken by Churchmen generally in a more liberal spirit, and that questions as to the authorship of the books of the Bible and other like critical questions receive full and fair consideration at the hands of Anglican divines. It is likewise due to them that more attention came to be paid to the moral and spiritual side of religious truth, and that men were led to think less of minute and trivial questions of doctrine and ritual.

At the same time, neither in these nor in other respects did the Broad Churchmen obtain more than a very temporary advantage. The chief points on which they insisted might indeed have been urged with more force against the position of the Evangelicals than against that of the High Churchmen, to whom the Evangelicals had already practically succumbed. For, as regards scripture, the High not less than the Broad Churchmen had broken with the old Protestant literalism and letter-worship ; and as regards not insisting sufficiently on the ethical side of religion, the High Churchmen of the new school were in some respects perhaps even less open to attack than the Broad Churchmen themselves, Church membership being regarded by them, following the example of mediæval and primitive times, as pre-eminently a discipline of the moral life. Though, therefore, it cannot be maintained that these two

schools of religious thought looked at either of the matters above referred to in the same light, yet there was not the same opposition between them, either on these or on other grounds, as there was between the position of both of them in common and that of the Evangelicals.<sup>1</sup> A closer study than we have time now to enter on would show that these Broad Churchmen were themselves largely influenced by the Oxford Movement, though they were not well disposed towards its main tendency.

But what really brought these two parties into conflict was the depreciation by the Broad Church of the importance of dogma. It then became easy for the High Churchmen to argue that this position, if logically maintained, must ultimately lead to the surrender of all that was distinctive in the Christian faith. Now, here surely was a grand opportunity for the liberal Churchmen to explain and defend themselves; here was the occasion which a great constructive theologian, if there had been one in the liberal ranks, would have made his own. We see how much this was so from the extent of the influence actually exercised at the time we speak of by one who was not a great theologian but rather a great religious personality, viz., F. D. Maurice. A chance

<sup>1</sup> At the same time, a relationship has been found to exist between the Evangelical and the Oxford Movements, which, however, Dean Stanley is probably quite right in speaking of as exaggerated, "the succession which, though with some exaggeration, has been traced, of the Oxford Movement to the Wesleyan or so-called Evangelical Movement of the last generation." (*Christian Institutions*, preface, p. 7.) Some colour is given to this view by Dr. Newman's own account of himself, as likewise by the Evangelical antecedents of other Tractarian leaders. Hence, most writers on the Oxford Movement have dwelt on the connection between these two schools of religious thought. Probably, the truth is that there was a general sense of the deficiencies of Evangelicalism which expressed itself in the most various ways (the High and the Broad Church, the Plymouth Brethren, the pure theism of F. W. Newman, &c.).

was in fact offered to the Broad Churchmen which has not come, and which, it is to be feared, will not come again in the lifetime of the present generation of Englishmen. Instead, however, of taking advantage of what was thus placed within their reach, liberal Churchmen tended towards vagueness and mystification in matters of religion; some of them indeed seemed even to suggest doubts as to the value of any fixed determination of religious belief whatever. This course not unnaturally alienated from the Broad Church School the great body of Christian believers in the Church of England, and at the same time enabled extremists outside the Church to declare that there was no half-way house between the acceptance of High Church views and the rejection of the Christian religion. Henceforward, individual Broad Churchmen of more than ordinary gifts of character and intellect might still be listened to by their immediate followers, but their theological position in the Church of England, so far as it had been achieved, was forfeited, and the eyes of Churchmen were turned in an altogether different direction.

But we spoke also of the social or ethico-social side of this movement, by which we mean its effects in bringing popular Christianity into closer sympathy with social and political ideas, as also in causing to be duly appreciated the refining and spiritualising influence of culture, whether as consisting in the study of what is true, the contemplation of what is beautiful, or the pursuit of what is pleasant. Undoubtedly this is the part of the work of these Broad Church pioneers in which they were most successful, and for which they will be most remembered hereafter. Yet not less true is it that the reason that we hear so much less now than formerly of the Broad Church School is that its work in this respect has been taken up by the Church of England as a whole, or, as we prefer to say, by that party which is becoming most identified with the Church as a whole. There is now,

for example, in ecclesiastical circles, a recognition of the importance of social reform undreamt of by Maurice and Kingsley ; there is no modern representative English High Churchman who does not take a keen interest in the habits and recreations of the working classes, or who does not hold more or less decided opinions as regards the drink question. Nor are clergymen of this type illiberal as regards what they concede to man's natural desires. The old puritanical observance of the Sabbath has been relaxed ; a healthy interest in art, literature, and politics is no longer proscribed ; pleasures formerly reprobated as worldly and sinful are now seen to serve a moral purpose, if duly regulated as regards the manner and extent of indulgence in them. We are not concerned to comment on these tendencies which, though on the whole salutary, are no doubt liable to special dangers, and require to be tested by a stronger and sounder religious philosophy than has yet been applied to them. All we desire to point out is, that these tendencies owed their original influence amongst religious men and women in England very largely to the efforts of prominent Broad Churchmen, whose example was then imitated and reproduced by Churchmen of another and different type.

As for the Evangelicals, the decline of whose influence in recent times has lately been the subject of so much remark, it is enough to say here that that part of their teaching which stands in closest relation to personal religion has, in common with the other tendencies mentioned above, to a great extent been assimilated by the Neo-Catholic movement of the latter-day Church of England, as may be judged from the sermons of her most eminent preachers. We need hardly say that under this description we refer to the preaching of "Jesus only." It will be understood that the succeeding remarks have in view not this principle of Evangelical religion itself (which we should hold it both irreverent and irrelevant to intro-



duce into the discussion) but merely the mode in which it is now commonly treated by English High Churchmen. Such mode of treatment may and does differ from age to age. In the form which it now assumes the preaching of "Jesus only" may be regarded as an attempt to satisfy that need of direct and immediate presentation which is perhaps the chief need of the human spirit in its most recent development. It is the same need which expresses itself in our popular literature and philosophy, as likewise in the realistic productions of modern art. It demands the object itself, not the vehicle of thought by which it is conveyed, nor the canon of criticism by which it is justified. Now, no one who is acquainted with the sermons and addresses of the most popular preachers and missionaries of the Church of England at the present time—these being mostly High Churchmen—will doubt that the Evangelical method of winning souls here described is largely in favour amongst them. An evangelical style of preaching is not uncommon at the present time in Ritualist churches, and, what may seem stranger still, even the services of these latter have often a similar character. The early tendency of the Oxford Movement was strongly opposed to any such combination. In those days, we are told, that even an emotional inflexion of the voice was eschewed as savouring of an unchurchlike spirit. But now, in many High Anglican churches, both the preaching and the hymn singing are as warmly effusive as in a Methodist chapel. The change was due to that necessity for the reconciliation of opposites to which, as we have seen, the Church was impelled. Yet, none the less, it is not difficult to see which of the two members of the combination is really in the ascendant.

The peculiarity, therefore, of the Church of England in recent times consists in this, that whilst becoming more and more the Church of the High Churchmen, it has engrafted into its system principles of thought

and action which are not, or which at least were not originally, of this character. This peculiarity has, however, been more conspicuously manifested in regard to practical and devotional religion than in regard to theology strictly so-called. Down to quite recent times the *theology* of the New School remained at much the same point at which it had been left by the Tractarian Apologists. There might be wide differences in the manner and method of treatment, as for instance between such representative Churchmen as Church, Mozley, Liddon, Arthur Haddan, &c. But these Anglo-Catholic Divines and others contemporary with them did not make any essentially new contribution to the theology of their immediate predecessors.<sup>1</sup> No doubt, there have been changes in the point of view adopted by Churchmen of the same school in times yet more recent. But it is impossible to estimate the significance of these as yet merely inchoate performances, or to do more than refer to them as possible starting-points of a further theological development. It is at all events only in QUITE recent times—if at all—that there has been any such development beyond the Theology of the movement when it first started.

In other respects, however, the Oxford Movement has developed an appreciative and assimilative tendency which at the time of its origin would have been inconceivable. Doubtless, as we have said, the necessities of practical organisation required that Churchmen should adopt this more conciliatory attitude towards each other at this particular time. Yet, as has been already remarked, it would be a mistake to suppose that during these years the dominant party in the Church tended towards a *rapprochement* with other parties on the basis of a common agreement to sink existing differences. No ecclesiastical party can ever do that without the loss of its position,

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.* as regards novelty of starting-point. It is not of course meant that they did not make real contributions in other senses.

and it was part of the wisdom of the High Church Party at this time that they refused to make peace on these terms. A body of Churchmen which in the interests of social reform and in order to co-operate with others, drops what is distinctive in its churchmanship, is not only felt by mankind to be unworthy of respect, but it also ceases any longer to have a *raison d'être*, since what it does can be done not less efficiently by non-ecclesiastical agencies. As we have said, however, the High Churchmen at this time did NOT do this ; on the contrary, they resolved to impress their own ecclesiastical organisation on whatever they undertook, whether in the way of alleviating social distress or in any other way. Hence at the SAME time that they undermined the position of those who previously had been working on different lines from themselves, as above described, at the SAME time that they borrowed from their opponents whatever seemed likely to be of use for practical purposes, they endeavoured also to monopolise the field of labour by representing their own methods and modes of working as those of the Church of England in its corporate capacity. Their policy was thus only superficially one of compromise and accommodation ; what it really aimed at was the supersession of others by themselves and the readjustment of the Church of England on lines dictated by themselves.

In the carrying out of this work which they thus took upon themselves, it must be admitted that in many respects they have been highly successful. Their great aim was to make religion ATTRACTIVE. With this view, the popular taste was studied to an extent which half a century ago would have seemed both undesirable and undignified. In saying this we are referring not only to the increased attention paid to decency and comeliness in the public services of the Church, but also to the organisation of home missions and to the practice of carrying religion into the homes of the poor.

We should be sorry indeed to seem to depreciate either the work of this new school of Churchmen or their way of doing it. Nor have we any wish to represent their success as due to mere cunning and diplomacy, or as the result of a deeply-laid plot intended to win for them the supremacy which as a matter of fact they obtained. This impression may have been produced by the description given above, and is so far a true one that the High Church Party, viewed as an ORGANISATION, did and does tend to impress itself on the Church of England, both in the ways we have mentioned and in other ways. But the instinctive aims of an organisation need not be consciously entertained by the mass of the individuals who compose it, though in most cases, and certainly in this one, there are persons at the head of affairs (not always the supposed heads) who act more or less with deliberate intention. For the rest, it is sufficient to say that the High Churchmen obtained the lead in Church matters, because in many respects they deserved to do so. They were honest and sincere in their beliefs, zealous and indefatigable in their work, and they had the great advantage, possessed by no other Church party, of knowing both what they wanted and how it might be reached.

## CHAPTER II

### DEVELOPMENT OF CLASS ATTRIBUTES

#### 1.—*The Clergy*

THE interest of the English Church Movement of the nineteenth century consists in its coincidence with the more general movement of material and industrial civilisation during the same period. Wholly independent and even hostile as these two movements were in their origin, they could not but affect each other in the course of their subsequent development. Of course, the chief influence exerted was that of the larger movement on the smaller one, not *vice versa*. As a matter of fact English ecclesiastical affairs have been largely shaped and directed by the inventions and improvements of modern mechanical science. Now, it might seem that this latter influence would be all in favour of universalism and against the formation of classes and the exercise of class government, since obviously as people are able to see each other and to communicate with each other more easily and frequently, even though separated by what were once thought great distances of space, all merely local and even provincial class associations must tend to decrease. So obvious, indeed, is this aspect of the case that in the first instance, in the early days of the new industrial era, in the thirties and forties of the present century, the reign of universal peace and goodwill *was* expected to result from the influence of these new agencies, and the ideas which are typically

represented in Tennyson's "Locksley Hall" (a product of this period) did not then appear nearly so visionary as they do now.

Yet it will not seem wonderful that these high hopes should have ended in disappointment, if we consider the grounds on which they rested. For this movement of contemporary civilisation tends quite as much towards the formation of class ties in one direction as it does towards their loosening in another. We have only to reflect what an opportunity for the organisation of men spread all over the country in isolation from each other these mechanical powers gave, and we shall understand that what is called civilisation operates quite as much to keep in existence classes based on *community of opinion and identity of interest* as it does to abolish the older classes based on local contiguity. Mechanical inventions destroyed the older classes, but these same agencies were the strength of the NEW class formations which were thus able to gather their members from all parts, and to keep them in touch with each other, even when separated. Hence, as those local and provincial limitations have tended to disappear, there has been developed a disposition towards class association of an altogether different, though not less binding, character. The destruction of the old restricted forms of union, instead of leaving men to exist side by side as individuals on the one hand, or uniting them in a universal brotherhood on the other, has suggested to them the division of themselves into classes representative of *tendencies*, the organisation of such classes being greatly helped by the power of rapid self-transfer and easiness of communication.

Universalism may no doubt be the final outcome of this state of things ; as to that it is impossible to say. But whatever may be the ultimate result, it is certain that class division and class antagonism were never more prevalent than they are now. Men have, it is true, effaced the old distinctions, or are

in process of doing so, and in forming new combinations they have adopted a wider basis of union. But the *particularism* of class association remains as strong now as ever it was, as may be seen from a consideration of the chief opposing tendencies of contemporary thought and life—the great dividing lines of religious thought and social cleavage, not less than the smaller divisions of ecclesiastical denominations and political parties, were never more strongly marked than they are now.

Now, the Church of England in its present state is a product of these new influences, in some respects indeed, strange as it may appear, their most characteristic product. The time when the Church was hardening its lines and adapting itself more exclusively to a single, uniform, ecclesiastical type, was likewise the time when this process was going on everywhere else. The necessity that the organisation of the Church should assume some one definite form led to that form being chosen which was the *most* definite, the most fitted as regards its own members for intensive class-association, the most strongly marked in its character as regards outsiders. The Broad Churchmen in the ecclesiastical sphere embodied the same desire for universalism which was prevalent in other spheres, but which in every sphere gave way before the still stronger desire for definite limitations and restrictions. It is, in short, impossible to explain recent English Church history except by reference to the accompanying facts of modern civilisation. And thus in considering further that tendency towards uniformity of which we have been speaking, and in treating of it in connection with the clergy and laity of the Church of England, we must be careful to remember that it was not wholly self-developed; the ecclesiastical germ was seized upon by outside influences, and was thus made to expand, though doubtless this could not have happened unless (as must be the case in everything that lives and

grows) it had contained in itself a principle CAPABLE of expansion.

We shall now proceed to discuss the present character of the Church of England clergy.

The clergy of the Church of England have tended of late years to become more and more a *class*; more and more, they have formed themselves into a close organisation which, whilst helping to consolidate their scattered energies, has intensified their professional distinctness from the rest of the community. There would be nothing so wonderful in this if it were not that it ran counter to all the traditions—good and bad alike—of English clerical life. The BEST of the English clergy since the commencement of the Georgian Era have made much of the identification of their own interests with those of their flocks; they have mixed on equal terms with the common life around them, they have been esteemed as friends and neighbours scarcely less than as clergymen. The WORST of the English clergy, during the same period, have imitated only too closely the vices of the aristocracy and squirearchy to whom they have cringed, they have neglected their duties whilst at the same time seeking, and often bargaining for preferment, and between these two extremes there have been many degrees both of virtue and of vice. But in all cases the conduct of the English clergy has been in close dependence on the national life, and has reflected that life. Now, however, we have before us a state of things in which all this partly has been, but still more is likely to be, changed.

This result is of course due in some degree to the policy of the Church Party—now no longer a party—whose history has been sketched above. Though looked at in the large sense and with reference to the ideas circulating in Europe at the time of its commencement, the Oxford Movement was essentially conservative, yet it admits of being regarded under an



aspect which gives to it almost a revolutionary character. Its professed aim, no doubt, was a return to antiquity, either primitive, or mediæval, or both ; but in order for this aim to be carried out it was necessary that all the subsequent and relatively modern associations of the Church of England—more especially those which are commonly called Georgian—should be made to disappear. And this was a great uprooting, for it involved the destruction or transformation of much which had come in process of time to seem inseparable from the existence of the Established Church, and which no doubt once had been so. Nothing less than this, however, was the aim of the movement when it was first started, and nothing less than this has been the aim pursued throughout its whole course. It was thus that Bumbledom was expelled from our Parish Churches, and that services, sermons, music, architecture, all alike underwent a change. But in none of these ways did the Oxford Movement show its tendency so plainly as in its efforts to effect a transformation of the clergy. What was desired was to make the clergy more professional, and, in relation both to their patrons and their dependents, less feudal ; to eliminate from their lives the tendency to unclericalise themselves in their intercourse with other men, and, on the positive side, to exalt the dignity of the clerical office and to draw into closer corporate union those who, as the dispensers of sacramental privileges, were regarded as forming a distinct and peculiar class.

The attempts made in this direction were, however, only very partially successful. The old character of the English clergy still to a great extent maintained itself, more especially in the country districts where ecclesiastical organisation was less easy, and feudal influences were stronger. Yet everywhere a great change was witnessed, though even the most representative clergymen of the new school adapted themselves in many respects to the old English

parochial system as it had come down to them from the last century. The Anglican clergy have indeed never altogether broken with the old system or altogether conformed with the new. The latter would have required them to remain celibate, or at least would have tended in that direction; as young men it would have gathered them into clerical seminaries; in later life it would have stripped them of their present social position and influence, and would have made them to a great extent dependent for their maintenance on what they received from others; above all, instead of being petty autocrats within their own parochial spheres, it would have rendered them obedient to the word of command from head-quarters. All this and much more than this would have been involved, if the English clergy had conformed in a thoroughgoing spirit with the continental model of clerical duty.

But besides that the Church laity, who after all (as we shall see presently) are the *really* governing class in the Church of England, would not have tolerated this result, the traditional associations of English clerical life were too strong to be thus suddenly set aside and altogether reversed. The wisest Churchmen of the time (wisest at all events as regards the matter in question), of whom we may perhaps select Bishop Wilberforce as a typical instance, saw this—they saw at once the strength of the new influences generated by the Oxford Movement, and, at the same time, they were aware of the immense force of repulsion against which those influences had to contend. And what was clearly perceived by Churchmen of exceptional capacity was instinctively felt and acted upon by men of a lower order of intelligence, and thus the rank and file of the English clergy came to present the features of a hybrid development. They were bitten by the new teaching, within certain limits they showed themselves extremely amenable to its influence; some of

the more earnest and active amongst them went very far in this direction indeed. But none the less, they recognised a point beyond which they could not go, and beyond which they did not WISH to go. They were happy in their homes, happy in the education they had received at the Public Schools and Universities, happy in the possession of social influence, happy in their intercourse with the mixed life of the world. As usual, different motives—some to be admired, others not so—led them to the actual position they took up, which was that of a thoroughly English compromise.

Hence, as regards the particular matter with which we are here concerned, viz. the increasing tendency of the clergy to form themselves into a separate and distinct class, what was done consciously and overtly with a view to this end of the Church's own motion would not perhaps have amounted to much, had it not been that there were forces of an independent and non-ecclesiastical character urging the Church in the same direction. Apart from these latter and more general influences, the clerical revolution would probably not have gone beyond the occasional defiance of the law by individual clergymen. No doubt, too, High Church Training Colleges for the clergy would have been founded, intended to foster a similar disposition, together with some other educational institutions of a like kind. But neither the illegal practices of the Ritualists, nor the educational efforts of the extreme High Church Party would have had, any more than as a matter of fact they did have, much effect on the clergy as a class, if the Church of England had been left to herself, and had not been impelled further in the direction towards which she was already timidly drifting by forces over which she had herself no control. These more general influences we ascribe to those improved means of locomotion and communication which, as we have seen, in all departments of life have so

immensely affected the social development of Modern England.

That the transformation of English social life under the new influences above referred to had a very material effect on the position of the Anglican clergy cannot be doubted, though this effect has been less generally noticed than some others following from the same causes. Few persons now probably have any conception of the extreme localisation of clerical interests previous to the introduction of railways, telegraphs, and the penny post. The ecclesiastical aspect of these changes might indeed easily be ignored when so much attention was being called to their effects in other directions. Yet in no other direction was the effect produced more real, though it might in some others be more striking. It was not merely that the social position of the clergy was thus changed. As to that, so far as it bears on our present subject we shall have something to say presently. But now we are concerned with the position of the clergy as an ecclesiastical body. The ecclesiastical effect of these changes—which did not for a long time nor until quite recently show itself—consisted in this, that the clergy now became united together as a class to an extent which had never before been witnessed. Previously, each clergyman had been isolated in his own district without knowledge of his clerical brethren, except of those in his immediate neighbourhood. There were at that time few clergymen of widespread, public reputation whose influence radiated throughout the Church. It was not that there were not men of merit enough to be thus esteemed, but rather that there were no channels of influence through which this merit could convey itself. The one luminary of his own order whom a clergyman of the olden time *did* esteem, because of him he HAD some slight personal knowledge, was his own Bishop. Distinguished men amongst the clergy who had not this titular eminence

were not personally much known beyond their parochial spheres, and we are often surprised to find how little clerical scholars and divines of acknowledged worth seem to have been regarded by their contemporaries.<sup>1</sup>

Again, in the olden time the centre of ecclesiastical interest was in the rural districts of England rather than in the towns; the most characteristic specimens of the clerical profession, good and bad alike, were country parsons. Now, no doubt, country parishes are the best material for developing the pastoral side of the clerical office, which indeed is that side of it in which up till quite recently the Church of England has been the most successful. But this field of labour gives little scope for associated efforts of clerical organisation. On the other hand, the towns were not then the seats of intelligence that they are now, and they were served for the most part by an inferior class of clergy who were not more stimulating than their environment. No doubt a good deal of missionary and evangelistic work was done in the towns by those within the Church who followed in the footsteps of Wesley and Whitefield. Yet the one great difference between Methodism and Church of England Evangelicalism consisted in this, that the latter showed no

<sup>1</sup> Some of the most eminent clergymen of the Church of England in the eighteenth century remained during a great part of their lives unbeneficed. "There were not wanting . . . . unbeneficed clergymen who in point of abilities and condition might have held their own with the learned prelates of the period. Thomas Stackhouse, the curate of Finchley, is a remarkable case in point. His *Compleat Body of Divinity*, and still more his *History of the Bible*, published in 1733, are worthy to stand on the same shelf with the best writings of the Bishops in an age when the Bench was extraordinarily fertile in learning and intellectual activity. John Newton wrote most of his works in a country curacy. Romaine, whose learning and abilities none can doubt, was fifty years old before he was beneficed. Seed, a preacher and writer of note, was a curate for the greater part of his life."—Abbey and Overton, *English Church in the Eighteenth Century*, vol. xii. p. 17.

capacity for organisation, whereas the former was as much distinguished by the perfection of its machinery and its organised efforts for doing good as by its preaching of the gospel.<sup>1</sup>

Such then was the state of things previous to the new industrial era and the Oxford Movement. For, as we have said, in order to understand this latter, we must consider it in connection with the new social and industrial development which was contemporary with it and which affected and was affected by it, little as these two things may seem to have in common.

Now, as has been already pointed out, the first effect of the improved facilities for communication caused by the introduction of new mechanical inventions and appliances was to bring the Anglican clergy into closer union with each other. The Church's work in one part of the country was now easily signalled to every other part; active and enterprising clergymen could be about everywhere at a moment's notice; they could have an immense acquaintance and an immense correspondence. Tidings of any new undertaking in Church work which had proved successful spread with marvellous rapidity and produced imitations far and wide. A cheap popular Church literature sprang up which made the clergy acquainted with the opinions of those with whom they wished to agree. Above all, the new

<sup>1</sup> It was on a question of organisation, viz. as regards the parochial system of the Church of England, which seemed to him indefensible, that Wesley separated himself from the Evangelicals. The alternative suggested by Wesley, that of itinerant preaching, may not be the best remedy. Yet we are not so well satisfied with the working of the parochial system, more especially in country districts, as to be able altogether to agree with the spirit of Mr. Overton's remark when he says "He" (Wesley) "predicted that even the earnest parochial clergy of his day would prove a mere rope of sand—a prophecy which the subsequent events will scarcely endorse."—(Abbey and Overton, *C. H.*, vol. ii. p. 76.)

influences produced a desire for association amongst the clergy and in the Church generally, the result being new Church societies, Church congresses, attempts at synodal action, Church guilds and confraternities of all sorts and for all sorts of objects, some of them scarcely, if at all, connected with the ecclesiastical movement of which they were the outcome. Thomas Mozley has remarked of the Oxford Movement that "whatever may be said of its priestcraft, it has filled the land with Church crafts of all kinds. Has it not had some share in the restoration of biblical criticism and in the revision of the Authorised Version?" What seems to be meant is, not that biblical criticism and exegesis are themselves an outcome of the Oxford Movement, but that these results may be traced to that habit of association which the Oxford Movement has engendered, and which it derived from the larger movement of civilisation of which it was part.

Now, obviously all this tended to make the clerical body more one throughout, more like-minded and homogeneous. There is a way of doing things which more and more in each department of clerical labour has come to be observed; more and more, clergymen are learning to look at things from the same point of view and to know what they are expected to think on any given subject; more and more, a clerical class type tends to prevail, as may be seen even from such small indications as those of manner and tone of voice. No doubt, part of this effect is due to the influence of clerical Training Colleges, as likewise to the example of certain chief men amongst the clergy who have gathered round them a school of imitators. But, as we have said, neither of these influences would have produced such marked and such widely spread results, if there had not been other more general forces tending in the same direction. These forces, which in their origin were social and industrial, were made use of for ecclesiastical purposes.

The clergy thus came to know their strength, for, as has been already pointed out, these new forces were as potent to create and maintain classes which were independent of all merely local associations, as they were to destroy classes whose only claim to existence was derived from this source.

Another influence which helped to develop and intensify clericalism in the Church of England was the decline—or at all events the transformation—of the influence of the Church and of her clergy in the Universities. These latter were now thrown open to persons of all denominations, whilst by the University Statutes of 1877 all or nearly all strictly clerical privileges were abolished. Now, academical influences are dead against clerical and ecclesiastical organisation. They no doubt often—indeed almost always—associate themselves with the established forms of religion, and they encourage a treatment of religious subjects which is usually conciliatory and sometimes even conservative. But nevertheless they are very unfavourable to a strong system of Church Government; they shake the basis of such a system by the application to it of general ideas and liberal culture. Hence it will easily be understood that whilst the maintenance of the connection between the Church and the Universities acted as a hindrance to clericalism, the fact of the clergy becoming much less academical was a cause of their becoming much more distinctively and exclusively clerical.

The loosening of the tie itself had been in progress for some considerable time before it was legalised by State intervention. In point of fact, quite apart from any legislation affecting the position of the Church in the Universities, the Anglican clergy have long been growing less academical; the set of the Church of England has not been in this direction. Not that in one sense the Church is on that account losing ground at the Universities. It is indeed not certain, and by the most competent authorities would probably be



denied, that the influence of the Church in the Universities is less strong now than it was thirty years ago. But that influence—though it may not be less strong—is of a wholly different kind ; it is the influence, no longer of an official and established institution, but of a private and voluntary one. Hence, whilst outside the university curriculum and independently of it, much spiritual good is being derived by members of the university from the Church's teaching, and much active good is being done both by graduates and undergraduates, in the shape of the promotion of Church work, there is no inherent relationship of the clergy to the universities such as existed formerly owing to the clerical composition of the governing bodies of colleges, the acceptance of college livings by the fellows of colleges, and above all the almost exclusive preoccupation of men's minds at the universities with those same Church questions with which the clerical mind was preoccupied throughout the country.

It is not intended to imply that in consequence of their less academical character, the clergy are now less learned or less cultivated than they were formerly, but only that the tendency of this characteristic is to help further to convert the clergy into a separate and distinct class. The clergy now-a-days are doubtless a better educated body of men both generally and as regards the requirements of their profession than they were formerly. But the very improvement of the clergy in this respect is of a strictly professional kind and has very little in it of that assimilative spirit which is due to academical influences. It would indeed be an injustice to speak of the training which a typical High Church clergyman now passes through as being of a "seminarist" type. But undoubtedly it tends more in that direction than it does towards the association of religion with humanistic studies and general enlightenment.<sup>1</sup> We regard this therefore as

<sup>1</sup> It has been found somewhat difficult to describe briefly the nature and effect of the tendency here referred to. In an essay

another influence tending to convert the clergy into a separate and distinct class.

But a much stronger influence in this latter direction is that arising from the changes which of late years have taken place in the *social* position of the clergy and which we shall now briefly discuss. As we have said, the original tendency of the Oxford Movement was adverse to the claims of the Anglican clergy to continue to rank as men of social position and influence apart from their profession. At the same time, we said that this original tendency of the movement found itself checked by strong conservative prepossessions influencing the clergy in an opposite direction, the result being a compromise. We now go on to observe that this question was not left to be decided by the Anglican clergy, or at all events not by them alone. Of late years there has been growing up in England, as every one knows, a very strong democratic feeling, and this feeling, though it has not

written now more than thirty years ago, and entitled "Learning in the Church of England" (*Essays*, vol. ii., ed. Nettleship)—an essay which was far more prophetic than retrospective—Mark Pattison analysed in his usual masterly fashion the depression of learning amongst the Anglican clergy in their latter-day development. He compared the clergy who were the outcome of the Oxford Movement very unfavourably in this respect with their predecessors. The present writer agrees with the essayist in his main view, but he considers it too much to expect that a movement which has spread itself over the length and breadth of the land should preserve the same learned character which it had when it was confined to a small circle of students at Oxford in its first days. He also thinks that if the essay were written now, it would require to be corrected so far as to show more recognition of the attainments of a large number of the working clergy, and of their efforts to improve themselves. It is not so much that the Anglican clergy as a class are now so destitute of learning, as that their learning, like everything else pertaining to them, seems to run increasingly in a fixed professional, and therefore non-academical, groove. Everything centres on "the work of the Church." A clergyman's width of knowledge often serves to make him not less but more narrow through not being combined with width of view.

shown itself to be anti-clerical after the continental fashion, and it is to be hoped will not do so, is yet violently opposed to the aristocratic connection of the Church of England, and to the retention by Anglican clergymen of their emoluments—at all events as at present distributed—and social position. It is not our concern to inquire here whether, as is often asserted, the clergy deserve these attacks owing to their being for the most part on the Tory side in politics; enough for us that this feeling exists and is exceedingly strong. There can, we say, be no doubt that there are at the present time large classes of persons who resent what seems to them the unduly favoured position of the Anglican clergy in respect of the matters we have mentioned, and these are persons who possess great influence in determining the character of contemporary legislation, and whose efforts are likely to be directed even more than they have been already (whether by disestablishment or otherwise is for the present purpose not important) to reduce the clergy of the Church of England, relatively to what they have been, to *social* insignificance.

But neither from their *aristocratic* friends do the Anglican clergy now receive the same support as regards their MATERIAL and SOCIAL position that they once did. The Church clergy are, no doubt, now in high favour with the rich and well-born, and with men and women of exalted rank and station. Never, indeed, was this more the case than it is now. But then what these classes care for about the clergy now is very different from what they once cared for. The attraction which the clergy now exercise in the eyes of the aristocracy consists much less than formerly in their being bound to them by local and parochial ties. The great folk amongst the aristocracy, even if they are zealously affected towards the Church (which of course is not always the case), are now too much in London or elsewhere away from their country homes to see much of the parson in whose parish

their property lies. They help him by their subscriptions and official patronage, and—provided he is not a *persona ingrata*—they are glad during their occasional visits to offer him hospitality and to cultivate his acquaintance. But this is very different from the old quasi-feudal relation subsisting between the parson and the squire. On the other hand, the smaller country gentry of England are now in a very straitened position, and are rapidly decreasing in number. It would be too much to expect one socially declining class to be able to give much assistance to another in the same condition. The above remarks refer, of course, exclusively to the *country clergy*—a class of men whose social status is further prejudiced by the present depreciation in value of the sources of their incomes.

The clergy now most in favour with the world of fashion are either those who have made their influence felt as preachers or as organisers in our large towns, or else those who through not less exceptional, though different, powers have acquired an assured position outside their own parishes in the country. In either case, but especially in the former, the clergyman of distinction—whether real or merely supposed—becomes ever more in request in proportion as the rich and well-to-do classes have increased means afforded them of seeking him out. Not that the clergy more generally, those of them at least who represent the dominant type of churchmanship, do not also receive the support of the most influential classes of English society so far as regards Church observances and attendances, and so far as regards their agreement with the clergy in matters of Church order, ritual and ceremonial. But this attachment is felt towards the clergy as a professional body; it does not, as in the other case, even take much account of their individual gifts, but only of their indispensableness to the ecclesiastical system. To understand the strength of this attachment, it must be remembered that the

Church of England in its present state and the Church's patrons in "Society" are in many respects products of the same, or at least of similar, causes. In both there is the same appeal to an antiquity which, in the form given to it, is essentially modern; in both there is an imported democratic element; in both there is the same love of immediate effect, the same spurious æstheticism, the same desire to please all tastes. The Anglican mode of worship in its neo-catholic garb is well suited to the sensuous imagination, and the current Anglican system of teaching to the not too inquiring intelligence, of a modern fashionable London congregation. Such are some of the correspondences between the Church and "Society" which, however, affect the clergy rather officially than individually and personally.

Hence, the relation of the wealthy and well-born classes to the Church of England is now essentially an *ecclesiastical* one. The one point of our argument is that the clergy are drifting from their old *social* moorings, just as we saw that in like manner they were losing their connection with the universities; for better or worse, they are being thrown back on themselves and on their ecclesiastical and professional avocations. Even the superior clergy are being subjected to the same influences. Thus, bishops and other Church dignitaries are becoming every year *socially* less important personages. The bishops, indeed, are perhaps not compensated for this loss by any addition to their ecclesiastical importance; for the Church has now so many able and efficient workers in spheres of organising activity which the bishops used formerly to monopolise, that it seems as if this must, except with those of them who are giants, tend to weaken their prestige as rulers. Yet it is difficult to say how far this is likely to be the case.

We have now stated our views as regards the present position of the clergy. We consider that the clergy are tending, and still more WILL tend, to

become a separate and distinct class. They were partly themselves inclined, but still more they were driven, to adopt this attitude by the operation of forces beyond their control.

We have only one other remark to make before proceeding to discuss the present condition of the Church laity. The power of the clergy in the Church of England is very strictly limited ; it is limited not only by law, but also and still more, as we are about to point out, by the Church laity. There can be no greater mistake than that of representing the Church of England as in danger of a clerical tyranny. The Anglican clergy have become more separate and exclusive, but this has not made them ecclesiastically supreme. We shall return to this matter presently. We will content ourselves now by observing that whilst we agree with those who argue for an increase of the lay element in Church government, we do not make this claim on the ground of the arbitrariness of the powers exercised by the clergy. It is not the fact that the clergy of the Church of England incline as a class to arbitrary government. Parishes probably more often suffer from the want of some lead being given by the clergyman than from clerical domination, and this in itself is a strong reason for the proposed change. The fault of our present system is twofold, consisting, first, in the fact that it is *legally*, or at all events *practically*, open to any obnoxiously disposed incumbent to assert his own rights against those of a majority of his parishioners ; secondly, in the fact that the clergy are not more associated with the laity in parochial administration, by which means not only would parishes be more efficiently and representatively governed, but the laity would be made to feel the sense of church-membership, instead of regarding themselves as outsiders in the Church to which they belong. At the same time, though we readily admit the necessity of changes in this direction, we repeat, the Church laity are, even as matters stand now,

VIRTUALLY supreme in the Established Church ; merely, as in the case of so many other English institutions, those who have the real power either do not exercise it, or do so only at rare intervals. This is why it is often supposed that the Church of England is clerically governed, whereas in point of fact, as will appear presently, the characteristic peculiarity of this Church is that it is governed not by the clergy but by the Church laity.

## CHAPTER III

### DEVELOPMENT OF CLASS ATTRIBUTES

#### II.—*The Church Laity*

WE come now to speak of the Church laity, a class which we shall understand to include those and only those who worship according to the form and who are sympathetically disposed towards, if they are not actually engaged in, the work of the Church of England. Now, we shall endeavour to show that the Church laity, as thus understood, are in like manner forming themselves into a separate and distinct class, and that by degrees they are becoming differentiated from the rest of the community, instead of diffusing themselves over this latter and coalescing with it.

When we hear it said, as we so often do at the present time, that the work of the Church of England in recent years has been a triumphant success, and that this circumstance justifies the continued existence of that Church as an establishment, we are many of us so carried away by partisan predilections as to be quite unable to see that this assertion may be true in one sense and yet false in another. The fact is, that the Church of England has not of late years attracted a greater number of people, but that to those whom she does attract she has made herself very much MORE attractive. We have to do now only with these last.



We have already said a good deal as regards the tendency of the Church of England to become a class, but our remarks thus far have been intended to apply chiefly to the Anglican clergy. The Church laity (no doubt, owing to there being in their case no professional interest involved) do not manifest such a strong disposition towards intensive class association. Yet the change which has passed over the Church of England of late years as regards its laity is in some ways more remarkable even than the transformation of its clergy ; for these latter must always have been drawn together more or less by a feeling of *esprit de corps*, whereas in the case of the laity this feeling is of comparatively recent growth. The profession of churchmanship in England is now a very definite thing ; the Church of England, of late years, has become highly differentiated and denominational ; her own increased earnestness, which will not allow her to rest satisfied with the same easy-going terms of membership as formerly, has contributed amongst other causes to this result. It is true that much of the old feeling still survives ; we are speaking rather of a growing tendency than of an accomplished fact, and of course we are aware that many of those who frequent Anglican churches do not comply with the more exacting requirements which the Church now imposes. Yet, none the less, the main tendency of that party in the Church of England which is most in earnest and which commands the most general support is now, and is likely to be still more, towards a very definite religionism, and our point is that whilst this tendency eliminates the old formal worshippers, together with many others whose worship is not formal, it converts those who remain into a compact and united body separated from the rest of the community by distinct class attributes to an extent previously unknown.

Now, it was not until the type of religion which was destined, for the time at any rate, to prevail in

the Church of England had distinctly emerged, that the full nature of the contrast between those who did and those who did not accept the newly defined position of this Church could be perceived. Previously, there had been parties in the Church which had reflected different shades of opinion current amongst the laity. More particularly the Broad Church Party strove to give effect to the opinions of laymen generally ; such at least was the governing purpose of the teaching of Arnold and Stanley, Maurice and Kingsley. As long as this was so, as long as the Church of England was not exclusively identified with any one of the parties who claimed a share in her inheritance, there could be no ground for the assertion that she was becoming less national and more denominational. But as these and other differences were reduced to insignificance, or (what was the same thing) were made to appear compatible with High Anglican principles, the Church of England, thus formed, became *ecclesiastically* the Church of a class.

It will perhaps, however, be said that if all that is meant is that the Church of England has tended to assume a single uniform type, this tendency does not necessarily imply any class or denominational character attaching to the Church ; many, indeed most Churches, which have been national, and some which in their time have been almost universal, as *e.g.*, the Church of Rome, have been based on a single uniform ecclesiastical principle, and might, with as much and more reason therefore, have been spoken of as class denominations. But our contention is, not merely that the Church of England is tending towards uniformity, but that she is excluding from her communion those whom otherwise she would have included, and that in *this* sense she is becoming the Church of a class. The fact is that the Church of England, not being able to have two good things, resolved at least to have one. The assaults of the

modern revolutionary movement could only be met in one or other of two ways ; either by comprehension, concession and conciliation ; or else by a less diffusive and desultory mode of warfare, a closing together of the lines within narrower limits, a more united army and a more definite programme, carrying with it the loss of doubtful and half-hearted allies.<sup>1</sup> The Church of England chose the latter of these two policies, each of which is strong precisely where the other is weak.

It may be thought inconsistent with this characterisation of the present state of the Church of England, that we have above indicated absorption and assimilation of foreign matter as chief features of Anglo-Catholicism in its most recent development.

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Thomas Mozley, *Reminiscences*, vol. ii. p. 384. "Forty years ago . . . the state of things just as they were did not seem a sufficient basis for defence against the general dissolution of faith threatening the Church. If we would continue to believe what we professed, we must all believe more, and find in more definite ideas a protection from growing carelessness and indifference." Mozley presents the two alternatives at that time as consisting the one, in the adoption of a "more Catholic form and manner;" the other, in "the removal of everything disagreeable to Liberals, Dissenters and Anti-Sacramentarians." The same two alternatives are presented, though from an opposite point of view, in the following well-known passage of Dr. Arnold. "The very notion of an extensive society implies a proportionate laxity in its point of union. There is a choice between an entire agreement with a very few, or general agreement with many, or agreement in some particular points with all ; but entire agreement with many, or general agreement with all, are things impossible. Two individuals might possibly agree in three hundred articles of religion, but as they add to their own numbers, they must diminish that of their own understandings . . . . Infallibility and ignorance can alone avert differences of opinion. Men at once fallible and inquiring have their choice either of following these differences up into endless schisms, or of allowing them to exist together unheeded, under the true bond of agreement of principle. The real question is not what theoretical articles a man will or will not subscribe to, but how we may embody within the National Church the fundamental Christian fellowship we profess, and realise in this life the Universal communion of the world to come."

But we have shown also that this policy, rightly understood, does not aim at the comprehension or toleration of differences, but at the reduction of them to the Church's own way of thinking. It may be, no doubt, that those who now give the law to the Church of England are quite right from their own point of view in thus acting; as to that we express no opinion. All we say is, that we can see in this course of proceeding nothing inconsistent with our description of the Church of England as tending more and more to become a class Church, and hence to array itself against other classes which formerly it contained within its own communion.

The Church of England then, or what is now coming to be thought of as such, has of late years not so much herself inclined as been driven by the necessities of her own practical organisation to adopt a position of great exclusiveness, and the effect of this has been to alienate in heart, if not in outward act, many of those who were formerly attached to her communion. This alienation has taken two forms—the one sectarian, the other altogether undenominational. We shall speak more particularly as regards both these classes later. As regards the former, it may be sufficient now to say that the number of those who have become estranged from the Church and have joined some other form of communion, is less than under the circumstances might have been expected, though those who have taken this course have greatly suffered by being forced to attach themselves to denominations which in a different direction are far narrower than the Church and are not, like the Church, incorporated with the national life. On the other hand, the Church has thus alienated or has helped to alienate from herself (for we do not mean to say that the Church is wholly responsible) a very considerable class of persons who are impatient of all denominational restrictions, the greater part perhaps (as we shall hereafter see) because they despair of the

possibility of any religion, but not a few likewise because the Faith of Christ does not seem to them to be understood by any of the Churches in a large spiritual sense. These latter are very different from the mere formal worshippers, many of whom the Church's action has also tended to exclude, though the aim of professional ecclesiastics is now, as it always has been, to confound these two classes of persons together.

Yet in spite of this narrowing tendency of Anglican ecclesiasticism, the Church laity of the Church of England are in many respects exceedingly LIBERAL, so much so indeed that the Church of England derives from this fact its peculiar character. In order to understand this, we must consider more carefully the position which the Anglican laity hold in their Church as compared with the position of the laity of other Churches of the same, or of anything like the same, antiquity.

Let us repeat then what has been already said ; it is by no means the case that the Church of England is now to an alarming extent dominated by her clergy, is in fact fast becoming clericalised. It is one thing to say that the clergy have tended to become a separate and distinct class, it is another thing to say that the clergy have tended to become supreme. The peculiar characteristic of the Anglican clergy at the present time is that they have tended in the first of these directions without thus acquiring for themselves supremacy or even ascendancy. The supreme class in the Church of England at the present time is the Church laity. It is the ecclesiastically minded portion of the community who exercise the real control over the Church through the Church clergy as their representatives. No doubt, the clergy remain technically in possession of many rights the exercise of which makes them to a certain extent independent of lay control ; many obsolete forms of clerical privilege, especially in parochial administration, have not yet

been abolished. But if changes in these respects were to take place, as it may be hoped that before long they will do, the clergy would only thus be made more easily amenable to an influence which they even now obey; their position would not be radically different from what it is at present. For clericalism, so far as it exists in the Church of England, does not originate solely with the clergy. To suppose that it does so is to ignore the deep roots of ecclesiasticism in the minds of the Church laity. It is these latter who really assign to the clergy the limits of their authority and the extent of their power. The Anglican clergy, in short, have at present a great deal of the form, but not much of the reality, of power, and the only effect of any legal changes affecting their position will be to make this truth more evident and to bring the machinery of the Church's constitution more into harmony with existing facts.

Now the Church laity, though latterly, as we have seen, themselves becoming less liberal and thereby alienating from the Church the non-ecclesiastical portion of the community, have yet, by keeping the reins of power in their own hands, exercised a liberalising influence on the Anglican clergy who, in spite of appearances to the contrary, occupy a subordinate position in the ecclesiastical constitution of the Church of England. This is in fact the great difference between the Church of England and the Church of Rome, in comparison with which all other differences are insignificant. It is due to this cause that the High Church Party in the Church of England have never been really a Romanising party, though it is not wonderful that this tendency should have been constantly imputed to them by their enemies. The fact is precisely as Principal Tulloch has stated it:—"The Anglo-Catholic tendency . . . has more than once in the course of its history shown an inclination towards Romanism . . . In times of excitement and agitation of the principles lying at its foundation this

is inevitable. But it would nevertheless be a grave mistake to confound the general movement with these occasional vacillations."<sup>1</sup> And the explanation of this fact is to be found, we think, not in any logical "thus far and no further" formulated by Anglican divines or ecclesiastics, but rather in the influence of the Church laity, who have never as a class encouraged what is called sacerdotalism, *except in matters of external ceremonial capable of being appreciated by themselves*. This too is the explanation of the change which the Oxford Movement underwent and in consequence of which it ultimately found favour with the large mass of English Churchmen who, at first in its Puseyite, and then in its Ritualistic, garb had regarded it as a form of Romanism.

Lastly, this fact, viz., that quite apart from the secular control of ecclesiastical affairs by the nation at large, there has also been a control more from within the Church exercised by the Church laity, explains the occasional inclination of Anglo-Catholicism towards Liberalism. It will be shown later that the whole hope of improvement in the Church of England is derived from this fact. Meantime, and as regards the historical part of the matter, Principal Tulloch deserves again to be quoted, though what he says refers primarily to the seventeenth century. "This is one of the strange anomalies with which we meet in religious developments. Puritanism which began in impulses of liberty and which through all its history has been so associated with the assertion of political independence and the rights of conscience, has yet always been intolerant of dogmatic differences. . . . . From no quarter did the liberal theological spirit receive more discountenance, or more fervent denunciation and resistance. On the other hand, the High Church Party, while servile in spirit and tyrannic in the exercise of constituted authority, is found. . .

<sup>1</sup> Tulloch, *Rational Theology in England, &c. in the Seventeenth Century*, vol. i. p. 63.

... extending patronage to the earliest of our rational theologians. All these theologians came out of the bosom of the party, and continued more or less closely associated with it."<sup>1</sup> We might perhaps adduce as a parallel instance what we noted above, viz. the community of spirit which in some matters affiliated the Broad Church Party to the Oxford Movement, and which distinguished Churchmen of both these ways of thinking from the Evangelicals, who were less liberal. But, however this may be, it is certain that the latter-day Liberalism of the High Church Party in the Church of England is not a *clerical* propensity, but is distinctly due to the influence of the Church laity. And, indeed, we shall find signs enough to show that the Church laity of the Church of England, though, as we have seen, strongly marked by an ecclesiastical class type, have yet retained an amount of independence which, in a priest-ridden or unduly clericalised Church, would be impossible.

Take, for instance, the position of women. The ranks of the faithful in all Christian Churches at the present time are composed to a large extent, in some almost entirely, of women. Now, in the Church of Rome, which is a Church ruled by priests, women are allowed very little independence, less and less probably in proportion as they become more devout; much less would they think of interfering with the management of Church affairs except in entire subordination to the priests. In English Churchwomen, on the other hand, we see two characteristics of the feminine nature asserting themselves, both of which are opposed to anything like clerical domination. In the first place, we think that in Church matters more than in any others it has been shown amongst ourselves that the force of tradition as distinguished from that of personal association is weaker in women than it is in men. In the second place, we notice amongst ourselves, likewise especially in rela-

<sup>1</sup> Tulloch, *R. T. in England*, vol. i. pp. 63-64.



tion to Church matters, as a further characteristic of woman's nature, her power of going straight to the object of her desire by the instinct of feeling, and the habit thence arising of setting on one side, often without knowing it, the methods prescribed by custom and conventional decorum. Now it is ultimately to woman's influence, as derived from these two characteristics, that we must ascribe all those short cuts, if we may so call them, which have been taken of late years in the Church of England, towards a more immediate realisation of the object of Christian worship, whence have resulted so many changes in the manner of conducting Church services, and in the character of sermons, as well as in the literature of religious edification and devotion. Though, therefore, we do not mean to represent that English Churchwomen are not as regards all the essential demands of their Church on the side of what is established, we hold that their action in Church matters shows that they are not to any great extent clericalised, and that in this respect they reflect the spirit of the English Church laity in general.

Take as another instance of the comparative freedom and independence of the English Church laity, their disposition as regards secular knowledge and affairs. There again those of the laity with whom church-membership is a reality are easily distinguishable from others of a different, or at all events not virtually of this, way of thinking ; it takes but a little acquaintance with zealously affected Church people to recognise them as what they are even in the mixed life of the world. Yet it is not indifference to knowledge, nor incapacity for the discharge of business which constitutes this difference between English Churchmen and other Englishmen ; nor is there anything either in the traditions or in the current profession of Anglican churchmanship to encourage a spirit of estrangement from secular interests such as has often prevailed, and to a certain extent still pre-

vails, among the more devout members, especially amongst the "devout women" of other Christian Churches. Traces of this spirit may no doubt be found in our own Church, but they are exceptional. The priest in England has never been allowed *qua* priest to intrude into secular affairs, though in an *un*-official capacity he has hitherto been socially a person of no little importance. Church people are not either intellectually or practically less active than are other people amongst us. It may be said that, as they belong usually to the better educated classes, this is not wonderful. But quite apart from that consideration, and looking merely at the spirit, or what is called the "note" of Anglican churchmanship, we do not think it can fairly be complained that the Church laity of the Church of England are, as a class, indifferent to secular interests; a result which is due negatively to their independence of priestly control.

Now, the Church laity are a single and homogeneous whole, though the classes from which they are derived, looked at from a social point of view, may be variously distinguished. Of course, we are aware that the form of churchmanship now most in the ascendant is not as yet universal in the Church of England, and that there are many earnest Churchmen amongst the laity who are not High Churchmen. Throughout, however, we have been treating of a tendency rather than of a state of things actually now in existence; we have been considering what the Church is *coming* to, not what at present she can be proved to be without any exception or abatement. Similarly, in the present case, we do not mean to assert that there is nothing to vary the ecclesiastical uniformity of the Church laity of the Church of England; we, of course, know that there are large classes of Churchmen who are opposed to the prevailing tendency in the Church, or who, at all events, cannot be quoted as instances of its operation. All that we maintain and insist upon is the growth of a spirit of

uniformity amongst a certain section of English Churchmen who claim to give the law to the rest, and who have to a great extent succeeded in getting this claim recognised, as shown by the spread of their ideas, principles, and practices amongst the Church laity. These latter are in consequence becoming more and more organised on a common basis of High Anglican churchmanship, sympathy with which unites them together in spite of their social differences (which, however, being for the most part merely differences of degree are not very serious) in one ecclesiastical class. This ecclesiastical class is, of course, affected by the social character of those who compose it, whilst contrariwise it makes itself felt socially and even politically by welding together the upper classes of English society.

Such then is the Church laity of the Church of England, the characteristic features of which we will endeavour, before proceeding further, briefly to recapitulate. In the first place, we saw that the Church laity have latterly had impressed on them a strongly-marked ecclesiastical type, which, whilst it has immensely increased their own strength, has alienated from them many of those who were formerly Churchmen and are so no longer.

Secondly, we saw that, though the Church laity have been thus ecclesiasticised, they have not been to any great extent clericalised, much less priest-ridden. They have, in fact, retained the chief ecclesiastical power in their own hands, and the anti-Romanism, liberalism, and secular character of the Church of England are mainly to be ascribed to this fact.

Thirdly and lastly, the Church laity form, when taken together, one ecclesiastical class which at once affects, and is affected by, the social character of those whom it includes.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS AND ANTICIPATIONS

LET us now briefly consider the strength and weakness of a Church constituted after the manner above described. For it may fairly be asked at the point we have now reached, How far is the efficiency of the Church of England as a working machine helped or hindered by its present internal economy?

The value of the Church of England then, regarded ecclesiastically and socially as the Church of a class, depends on the extent to which it (*a*) benefits the class, with which it is associated. (*b*) conveys its benefits through this class to the rest of the community. As regards the first of these tests, it cannot be doubted that the benefit derived by those classes of society which form together the single homogeneous ecclesiastical class, in other words the Church laity, is a very real one. A great part—we may perhaps say the greater part—of the good which is done both to these classes and by them may ultimately be traced to their association with the Church. Similarly, though to a less extent, the application of the second test above mentioned exhibits the Church of England in a favourable light. Even those whose “ears are continually beaten with exclamations against abuses in the Church,”<sup>1</sup> must recognise that the Church’s influence tends to prevent the tone of religion from being debased, and

<sup>1</sup> Hooker, *Dedication*,

to refine and purify the public taste. We have shown also that there is no want of organised activity on the part either of clergy or laity with a view to making the Church more popular and attractive. On the contrary, efforts in this direction have for some time past been the most characteristic part of the Church's work. Finally, the Church laity, in spite of their strong tendency towards intensive class association, are yet—as we have seen—in many respects very liberal-minded, and keep in check the clericalism of the clergy. Hence, whatever faults there may be in this mode of Church government, it exercises many good effects primarily, of course, on those classes of society with which it is associated, but indirectly also through these on the rest of the community.

In truth it is when it is thus regarded as the government of a class that the Anglican mode of Church government most surprises us by its results. It has at all events as many good points about it as can fairly be reckoned to the credit of any other Church system. For if the governing class in our Church tends to become more of a class and therefore more exclusive, this exclusiveness is not likely even faintly to approximate to the exclusiveness of a clerical governing class. If again in our Church things are “done from above,” as is often complained, they are at least not done condescendingly or from interested motives. In short, the Church of England in regard to these characteristics shares both the merits and the defects of other English institutions which, though in form and very largely also in substance, aristocratic, are yet remarkably free from the limitations which are usually associated with aristocratic government.

Of course, however, the class government of the Church laity has its weak side. This latter appears when the governing class endeavours to extend itself and to exercise an influence over other classes. It is then liable to fail not so much because it is the gov-

ernment of a class as because it is the government of a class such as has been described. For, in this respect (we of course do not mean altogether) lay government is far inferior to clerical, and the Church of England therefore to the Church of Rome. A clerical class—though more jealous as regards its *own* privileges—is, socially considered, more equalising, since in relation to itself it places all classes of the community on the same footing. At any rate, the priesthood in a Church thus governed do not require the support of any ecclesiastical class amongst the laity.

Again, a governing clerical class is not shorn of its peculiar privileges by the Church laity, and hence is more able to adapt itself to the condition of persons whose backward state of development requires a religion without compromise. Its exclusively clerical privileges are the very means of its being able to do this. Thus the strength of the Church of Rome at the present time amongst the poorer classes, both urban and rural, is due very largely to the following institutions, the Mass—the priestly character of which has never been compromised; prayers and masses for the dead; the confessional; image worship (no matter in what sense understood, an essentially priestly device); the enforced celibacy of the clergy, which prevents them from forming social ties. Now, the Church of England has abolished all these institutions except the first, and even this it has divested (or until lately had done so) of much of its priestly character. In effecting these abolitions and modifications, the Church laity no doubt satisfied its own sense of propriety and brought itself more into harmony with the scientific spirit. But it did not thereby commend religion to the people. For it has not been found possible by a revival of mediævalism to awaken amongst these latter an enthusiasm for practices and ceremonies which, though less priestly than those above named, were intended to serve a similar purpose. Partly, these observances had been too long dropped

to admit of being revived, but still more the Church laity would not allow them to be revived in that thoroughgoing priestly form to which they had owed their original attraction. The consequence was, that this attenuated mediævalism did not obtain general acceptance, but was confined to that comparatively limited portion of the community which we have spoken of as the faithful Church laity. These latter, no doubt, created for themselves a new ecclesiastical environment, but with the obtuseness characteristic of all (except clerical) class government, they did not see that persons differently situated from themselves required a different kind of nourishment. The line they took, in fact, whilst, like the Roman system (to which it was considered an approximation), it repelled the scientific and literary classes, did not, like the Roman system, attract the masses of the people. The Church of Rome has made no attempt to conciliate the scientific intelligence of the laity, and among those classes therefore who stand aloof from all Church-membership she has both more, and more bitter, enemies than has the Church of England amongst these same classes. But amongst those classes whose difficulty as regards church-membership arises simply from the backwardness of their moral and material development, the Church of Rome is far more successful than the Church of England.

But if such is the strength and such the weakness of the Church of England, what are the chief issues as regards which she is now especially required to put forth her powers? In other words, what are the dominant tendencies of life and thought having for their object to revolutionise the Church's traditional character, as above described? And what is to be thought of the Church's position with regard to such tendencies?

Now, in two very different directions the Church seems to be threatened by revolutionary tendencies at the present time, the respective aims of which are

as follows: (a) The levelling down of the Church in accordance with democratic, and the reorganisation of the Church in accordance with socialistic, requirements—an ecclesiastical system depending on popular support and aiming at bringing the Church *down* to the people by means of an appeal addressed almost exclusively to the less educated sections of the community. How far such a system would, like that historically associated with the Jesuits, exalt itself ecclesiastically, whilst posing both politically and socially as “frankly democratic,” we shall not now attempt to determine. The possible intrusion of these ulterior ecclesiastical motives is not the point to which in this connection we desire to draw attention. Our point is rather that there is much in the present state of society which seems to promise success to this policy on social and political grounds alone. All, however, that need be said here is that—so far as the Church of England is concerned—this policy is essentially a revolutionary one, a conclusion which cannot but be admitted even by those who do not regard it as a retrograde one.

(b) An entire reconstruction of the Church of England, more especially as regards its fundamental doctrines, in order to suit the requirements of “modern thought.” The supporters of this policy are usually well disposed, and are sometimes even warmly attached, to the Church *except* in respect of its profession of theological belief. In this latter respect, they look on the Church as an effete institution, if not as an anachronism. It is, however, only in this negative sense that the revolutionary party here in question has any very numerous following. For the greater number of those who are alienated from the Church of England on these grounds do not see their way to make any proposals as regards the reconstruction of the Church, or, if they *do* see their way, are disinclined to propose what would not have the remotest chance of finding acceptance. Such persons



therefore cannot be included under the revolutionary party here referred to, though, if their *views* are considered, they appear as not less, but usually as far more, revolutionary than those who are so included. The importance of *both* these policies is, however, due to their connection with general ideas of larger scope circulating *outside* the Church.

Such, then, are the two chief revolutionary tendencies by which the situation with which the Church has to deal at the present time is very largely determined.

Now the Church of England is not inclined by her traditional character to make any very great concessions in either of these two directions. The Church, however, stands in a very different position to these two tendencies respectively. They are, in fact, in a sense incommensurable, inasmuch as the second of the two—which for want of a better name we must distinguish as anti-dogmatic—is destructive as regards the received interpretation of Christianity—(and that not only in our own, but also in all other Christian Churches)—whereas the first-named tendency is destructive only as regards the existing social status of a particular Christian Church. In this sense, therefore, the anti-dogmatic tendency is by far the more revolutionary and the more obnoxious to Churchmen. On the other hand, in a narrower sense, it is more revolutionary to level down the Church in accordance with democratic, and to reorganise the Church in accordance with socialistic, requirements than it is to revolutionise the Church's theology. For there is a certain, however insufficient, parallel to this latter attempt in the revolution of the English Church which was effected by the Reformation, whereas the social character of the Church of England has been uniform and unbroken throughout the whole course of its history.

Yet though these two tendencies may be thus distinguished, we should be taking a very superficial view, if we were to suppose that the Church of

England is ever likely to be very powerfully influenced by them separately and in isolation from each other. Such a view obtains a certain amount of countenance at the present time owing to the fact that not only have the *Church* parties who are most representative of these two tendencies very little mutual sympathy, but the representatives of these same tendencies *outside* the Church do not seem inclined, in England at all events, to co-operate together. But these facts, though they show no doubt that in England the two tendencies in question are at present working apart, by no means show that they will always continue to do so, still less that they are incapable of combination. Even now on the Continent the "revolution," as it is called, divides itself equally under these two forms and does not separate between them. We may think, as we certainly must hope, that the continental mode of effecting this combination will never find favour amongst ourselves. But the fact that there is on the Continent such a combination, no matter of what kind, is a sufficient proof that there is no essential repugnance between the members combined.

Nor could there be anything more unfortunate—except indeed that the Church should refuse to concern herself with *either* of these tendencies—than that she should concern herself with *one* of them to the exclusion of the other, or show a marked preference for one of them as compared with the other. This latter is a danger to which Churches are always liable, though it does not always lie in the same direction. In the early part of the eighteenth century, when the Deistic controversy was at its height, the best part of the Church's strength was absorbed in the endeavour to do battle with the Church's enemies by arguments addressed to the reason and intellect. The danger then was lest the Church should sacrifice her practical efficiency to the pursuit of intellectual aims, and the course of events in the *latter* part of the eighteenth century shows that the Church did not altogether

escape from this danger. At the present time, there is a similar danger, only that it is now from the opposite side. The Church is now sorely tempted to prefer questions of practical organisation, together with social and industrial questions, to questions of speculative, scientific, and historical criticism.

There is an obvious reason, already referred to, why this temptation makes itself felt. For no practical changes, no "democratising" changes, however sweeping, can ever in the eyes of Churchmen amount to a revolution in the same or anything like the same sense as would be involved in a rejection or mutilation of the "fundamentals" of Christianity. Now in all matters, but in matters of religion most of all, the course which is credited with the most dangerous consequences, if it is carried too far, suffers in comparison with other courses which, though not less difficult to prosecute within safe limits, are regarded as less dangerous if pursued beyond those limits. Thus theology stops short of the point which it might safely reach, and which it knows that it might safely reach as far as regards *immediate* results, simply from a haunting fear of possible *ultimate* results; whereas other branches of inquiry, which do not intrinsically admit of a further advance being made, are yet carried further owing to there being no such apprehension as to "what may come of it." Indeed not only are practical questions and questions of social and industrial reform not feared so much as are questions of the "higher criticism," but often unconsciously, and sometimes even intentionally, the former class of questions is favoured by Churchmen with a view to the exclusion of the latter. The association of the Oxford Movement with the "condition of the people" question was, as we have already maintained, partly due to this motive. It would be unjust to say that it was wholly so. Undoubtedly, however, the increased popularisation of the Church is to be ascribed *partly* to the influence of fear.

At the present time, however, there is, especially on the part of the more "forward" school of the High Church clergymen, a *disinterested* desire to adapt the Church to suit the tastes of the masses. And often the schemes which are proposed, or which are waiting to be proposed, with a view to this end, partake, socially and politically, *i.e.*, of a decidedly revolutionary character. Now, the inevitable criticism on this whole movement must be, not that it is not good so far as it goes, but that it does not go far enough. By this we, of course, do not mean that it does not go far enough in its own revolutionary sense—as to that it would be impossible to form an opinion except with regard to detailed proposals—we mean rather that the movement in the direction of this tendency is not combined with any movement in the direction of the other revolutionary tendency—whether in the way of concession or of refutation. In this sense therefore the popular sympathies of Churchmen are not popular enough.

But this growth of clerical radicalism is not likely seriously to engage the attention of the Anglican laity except in so far as the social and political forces which govern the development of England tend in the same direction. This latter result, however, is not only probable, but seems even now to be in course of preparation. Not that by thus expressing ourselves we intend to commit ourselves to a belief in the approach, either near or remote, of Disestablishment and Disendowment. For whether that consummation remains in store for the present or for some future generation of Churchmen, or is destined to be indefinitely postponed, it does not seem doubtful that, if not the constitutional, at all events the *practical*, position of the Church of England will undergo a radical transformation in the course of no such very distant period of time. And it appears to us that this larger movement of radicalism will be like that of the smaller clerical movement to which we have referred

with this essential difference, that it will not *be* clerical, or conceived in the interests of clericalism, or inclined to make any reservations satisfactory to the clergy with regard to the maintenance of the received religion. We advisedly attribute to the new radicalism only this *indirectly* negative attitude in Church matters, because we do not believe that, in England at any rate, it will be *positively* anti-dogmatic, still less anti-religious. But the probability of an *indirectly* negative attitude in Church matters on the part of the secular powers that be appears, if not as an established fact, at least as no very remote inference from the existing tendencies of legislation, the utterances of politicians, and the more reasoned conclusions of journalists and men of letters.

Under these circumstances, especially if they became aggravated, the Anglican Church laity might not improbably, and not unreasonably, take a new view of the situation, and of their duty with regard to it. No doubt, in the description of the Church laity given above, we have represented them as tending of late years to increased exclusiveness as regards their principles of church-membership, and to an intensified isolation in matters of religion from the laity in general. It may therefore seem inconsistent that we should now suggest the possibility of larger views being entertained, and of a softer mode of behaviour being adopted, by the very same persons whom we have previously refused to credit with any such proclivities. But the Church laity of the Church of England have always inclined strongly in some one direction for the *time*, and have afterwards inclined not less strongly in some other direction, and there is every reason to suppose that such will again be the case. It is the very advantage of lay government over clerical that a Church thus governed is able to reconsider its position, to open itself to new influences, and to adapt itself to changed circumstances.

Now it is from the Church laity of the Church of

England that the character for moderation attaching to the Church has proceeded. It is not a mere arbitrary phenomenon, but is the expression of an historical tradition distinctive of the governing classes of English society in their mode of behaviour towards the Church. The attitude of these classes in maintaining a policy of moderation has been of the most unwavering consistency. Their own preferences in religious matters have, of course, differed in each succeeding generation—they have been political Churchmen, Latitudinarian Churchmen, Evangelical Churchmen, Puseyite Churchmen, not to speak of many other minor differences. But they have both always maintained their own supremacy in Church matters, whether as against the clergy on the one hand or the uneducated masses of the people on the other, and they have at the same time always preserved that character of moderation in respect of the questions at issue between Church parties which is the distinguishing peculiarity of the Church of England.

In what is here said, or about to be said, we are not venturing on any prediction of coming events, but are merely stating our belief as to the probable outcome of existing tendencies.

In the first place, then, we believe that what will more and more engage the most serious attention of the Anglican Church laity will be the insufficiency of the provision made for the maintenance and public recognition of the received religion. The tone of modern society and of modern legislation on this subject is partly neutral but almost necessarily tends to be, or (which for our present purpose is much the same thing) to *seem* to be, as we have already remarked, at all events *indirectly*, negative. The average thoughtful Churchman—and it is such an one whom in the succeeding remarks we have chiefly in view—will not indeed regard this state of things with that indignation, nor will he exhibit towards it that resentment, which it excites in the minds of those

whose attachment to the Church is less under the control of reason and intelligence. He will see that under the present conditions of civilisation it is in part natural and inevitable, in part also he will recognise that it may have ultimately a healthy and beneficial influence. Still, he will be profoundly dissatisfied with this state of things. Its continuance, however, will not suggest to him the desirability of opposition and antagonism—which he knows to be futile—so much as of seeking to provide a remedy against it by self-originated action on the part of the Church. It will appear to him that, as the Church cannot have public authority in the State and in society on her side, she must make special efforts of her own in order to supply the deficiency. The Church must try new expedients, must seek out new opportunities, if she is to become influential, or even if she is to retain for the form of faith which she professes its present influence.

The perception of these facts will then cause, and indeed is now causing, the more far-seeing amongst the Church laity to examine not only more diligently, but also more sympathetically, than they have yet done into the conditions on which the Church may hope to obtain the support of different classes of Englishmen hitherto alienated from her, either wholly or to a great extent. Of course, it is not intended to suggest that the laity will undertake this inquiry independently of the clergy. The latter will bear *a* chief, perhaps *the* chief, part in it, only they will have the laity at their back and will be animated by the broader opinion of the laity in the prosecution of their efforts. And this makes all the difference. For the clergy, if left alone, either have no policy except that of simple resistance to the secularising forces of the age, or else, if they have any other policy, it excludes the religious question and restricts itself to the field of social and political reform often verging upon revolution. The laity, then, associated with the clergy, will examine into the possibility of recommending to English-

men the religion of their forefathers and the Church of their forefathers on acceptable grounds.

Now the Church laity, though not belonging necessarily or even chiefly to the aristocratic classes, do belong, at all events chiefly, to the well-to-do classes. But there are many influences now at work tending to bring these latter classes into closer sympathy not only with the poorer and less educated classes, but also with the growing intelligence of the country from whatsoever quarter emanating. The Church laity, therefore, besides their interest in the religious question, are becoming more and more interested in social questions. At the same time, as their candid friend Mr. Gore is fond of informing them, their concern with the religious movement of the nineteenth century has been confined hitherto chiefly to its artistic and æsthetical side, or, at any rate, if it has led them generously to assist other classes, has not led them to mix freely in personal contact with the members of such classes. But many of the laity, and in some cases not the least strong Churchmen amongst them, are now beginning to see things in a different light, and though in matters of religion they at present share the opinion of the clergy that what is good enough for themselves is good enough, even if it is not too good, for other people, there is every reason to hope that on this as on other questions their minds may undergo a change.

The first of such changes which, though the time is not yet fully ripe for it, has already *begun* to operate, will in our judgment be the following. It will be seen that though the efforts of the modern High Churchism, new-Anglicanism, or whatever else it may be styled, have in many ways been highly successful—though working-class populations have in some cases been touched and awakened by them—though in some other cases the self-sacrificing devotion of Churchmen of this type has aroused a positive enthusiasm—the Church of England has not been and cannot be by these



agencies transformed into a popular Church in any comprehensive sense, cannot thus take hold of the masses of the English people, and by so doing establish its claim to be regarded as a national institution.

In the next place, it will be seen that the way to the solution of the religious question lies through the solution of the social question, and that, short of the solution of either question, the point to be aimed at is the approximate bridging over of the gulf which divides classes in order that they "may with *one* mind and *one* mouth glorify God, even (or "as"—καί) the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>1</sup> For what is wanted is a more thorough blending than exists at present of the authoritative and the popular elements in the Church's composition. Individual efforts, in the absence of a Church atmosphere breathed in common by different classes, are foredoomed to failure. The results of such efforts may in some cases be such as will be ultimately accepted. But at present they are either the expression of a cultivated sentiment which is above the "masses," or else they are the outcome of the most vulgar and blatant religious radicalism. The thoughtful Churchman will look for the fusion of the classes of society rather than for any union of Church parties to produce better results. The influence of authority will by this means regain its old strength, but it will be a rational authority and one depending on popular support. By this, of course, is not meant that the truth *itself* as regards the religious question depends on the relation subsisting between the classes of society, but rather that the Church would be placed in such a much better position for the determination of the religious question by an improved disposition of the classes of society, as that her solution of this same question would thereby be affected.

How this would be so cannot be here explained except so far as to suggest that the belief of such

<sup>1</sup> Romans xv. 6.

Churchmen as are here referred to is, that the theological questions which most demand solution would by this means gradually work themselves out without any such sudden and abrupt transition from the old faith to the new being required as is by many anticipated. What bars the way to such a result at present is the wide, though diminishing, gulf which separates the cultivated and educated classes—who still form the great bulk of the Church laity—from the masses of the people. Hence, it is of the very essence of any advance being made in this direction that there should be a gradual levelling down *and* levelling up of the Church, and that these two processes should be not only simultaneous but also reciprocal.

But against this mode of solution, it may be urged that at best it would result only in a compromise and in the avoidance of extremes. It would in fact be a "transaction"—so the objection might run—similar to that in which the very same Church laity (*i.e.*, the governing classes of English society) were concerned, when they effected what is known as the Reformation settlement. But a Church, though it may enjoy many other advantages by the avoidance of extremes, must to a certain extent at any rate forfeit its popular character by that very reason.

"The masses require either an intuitional religion, such as is provided by the grosser forms of Dissent in Great Britain, or a ceremonial of drill and parade, such as the Latin and Greek Churches offer to their subject populations. The apathetic attitude of the labouring class is no nineteenth century paralysis. . . . It has been thus from the beginning. The most recent historian of the English Church is aware of this when he says:—'To the strong conservative element in the English Reformation we owe the sad but undeniable fact, that the uneducated classes have never heartily embraced and lovingly cherished the mild and temperate spirituality of the Established Church. They unlearned the extravagance of the Roman superstition only to throw themselves readily into the arms of the scarcely less unreasonable Puritans; and under one name or another, in varying forms but similar spirit there

has existed from the days of the Reformers to our own a popular antagonistic feeling to the Church of the Reformation.<sup>1</sup>"

It may be contended, therefore, that as *then* the Church of England received a non-popular character on account of that avoidance of extremes which is of the essence of the English Reformation, so *now* any solution brought about by the Anglican Church laity would be equally of the nature of a compromise, and hence would be equally of a non-popular character, and therefore equally unsatisfactory.

Now, we have already admitted this character of compromise as attaching not only to the Church of the Reformation but to the Church of England throughout its whole subsequent course. We have admitted too how much the Church suffers because she has no single and simple tendency which the masses can appreciate as her essential characteristic. She is not like the Church of Rome with its confessional, its absolution, its masses for the dead. She is not like Methodism with its class meetings, its "experiences," its assurance of salvation.

Nor do we deny that the Church of England must always to a certain extent be of this character. Why indeed should we *care* to deny this? We desire no doubt—no one more so—that the Church of England should become a popular Church. But this is not all we desire for the Church. No success in the popularising direction is worthy of the name if it involves the sacrifice to a great extent of the Church's permanently characteristic excellences, its reasonableness, its moderation, its comprehensiveness, its intellectual sympathy, its reputation for learning. But it was through the compromise above spoken of that the Church became possessed, or at least became strengthened in the possession, of these very same qualities. Nor must it be forgotten that it is easy

<sup>1</sup> Pattison, *Essays*, vol. ii. pp. 267, 268. The quotation is from Perry, *History of the Church of England*, vol. i. p. 15.

for the Church to lose her present advantages without obtaining those which are desired on her behalf instead. This applies not only to attempts at Church Reform—in the sense in which this latter is ordinarily understood—but to all that feverish restlessness which displays itself in the origination, or more frequently in the adoption from outside sources, of methods and experiments intended to make the Church popular.

The important point, however, is that whatever we may think on this subject, and whatever may be our desires with regard to it, that character for compromise which has hitherto belonged to the Church of England is very unlikely altogether to *cease* to belong to it. The real truth is, that compromise is now a “note” of Anglicanism, whereas in the early days of the Post-Reformation Church it was but the form assumed by a political experiment. We see how much this is so from the fact that the very reaction against the compromise of the Reformers has in our own days itself assumed the form of a compromise, though of course of an entirely different kind. Of this latter some account has been given above in what has been said as regards the invasive policy of the High Church Party. That policy, it is true, appeared to us in the light not of a compromise, but of a bid for supremacy disguising itself under the form of compromise; and to this description of the High Church Party—so far as regards its relations with other parties—we adhere. In another sense, however, the party now dominant in the Church *did* aim at effecting a compromise, and that was as regards its mode of recommending Anglicanism to the acceptance of the masses. In this respect its programme was an eclectic one—though no appearance of incongruity, but rather a most attractive synthesis, was presented to the popular imagination. The attempt showed considerable ingenuity; it showed also not a little disengagement from prejudice on the part of a party which was of

all things averse from compromise and which hated the English Reformation not least of all on account of its compromising character. But this reference is only introduced in the present connection in order to show that compromise is so much an inherited tradition of the English Church that even when Churchmen are most trying to avoid it, they do but set up another compromise in the place of the one they depose.

The enlightened Church laity, therefore, who are hoping to vindicate for the Church of England a new character by an amalgamation of class sympathies, will not be frightened when they are told that their efforts as regards religion can only result in a compromise. They will recognise that to a certain extent this must be so, inasmuch as institutions cannot unmake themselves and reverse all their previous traditions. They will recognise not less that it *ought* to be so, if the Church's distinctive excellences are to be retained.

Nevertheless there is small reason for this reproach so far as regards its applicability to the ideal of ecclesiastical policy indicated in the above remarks. No doubt, if everything is a compromise and therefore non-popular which does not accommodate itself to the late Rector of Lincoln's cynical estimate of popular religion as being either gross vulgarity or else mere mechanical formality, then our Churchman's ideal—which falls under neither of these two heads—is a compromise, and is so far non-popular. But if we altogether decline to admit this low view of the religious capabilities of the "masses" we stand just where we did before as regards that view. Nor need we be a whit more discouraged by the example of the Reformation settlement. For the only point in common between this latter and the settlement which—as we believe—the Churchman of the future will aim at bringing about is the prominent position in both cases of the Church laity. But even as regards

this point the difference is far more striking than the likeness. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the Church laity was co-extensive with the whole English nation, whereas the very significance of the position of the Church laity now arises from the fact that we have to distinguish between the Church laity and the laity in general.<sup>1</sup> Again, the Church laity then made its power felt by means of parliamentary legislation, so much so that the political character of the English Reformation is one of the most familiar of historical axioms. Nowadays, on the other hand, the Church effects little by means of Parliamentary legislation, and seems likely to effect less.

But the greatest difference has reference to the moral and social influences brought to bear on the Church laity in the two cases respectively. It is not necessary to attempt to describe what these influences were three hundred years ago. That, however, which constitutes the main difference between the Church now and then is—it need scarcely be said—the democratic character of modern society and the consequent leavening of all classes in the present age by the democratic spirit.

Now, the influence of democracy—as we have already observed—has not, so far at any rate, tended

<sup>1</sup> If it should seem that this difference is rather in favour of the earlier settlement being presumably the more satisfactory as being the more national, this is only on account of the delusive appearance of the English Reformation which was not, except in its first beginnings, a national movement at all. The following is a good short description of the English Reformation under this aspect :—"Nationalsache konnte sie nicht werden. Trotz des soliden Grundes, welcher in England zu einem freien nationalen Leben gelegt war, waren die inneren Gegensätze zwischen dem Germanischen und Romanischen Elemente keinesweges überwunden, sondern das Volk stand noch unter der Feudal-Verfassung eines mächtigen Adels. Fussend auf humanistischer Bildung führten die höhern Stände auch eine Kirchenverbesserung ein, so dass England das Schauspiel einer doppelten Reformation darbietet."—HOLZHAUSEN, *Der Protestantismus*, Band ii. S. 836, 837.

to universalism, nor has it resulted, except superficially, in the levelling down of the distinctions of rank, wealth, and intellect. Its net result so far seems to have been to develop the principles of corporate union—first, between men of the same class, next, between different classes in their relation to each other. The Church of the Oxford Movement in its expanded form has hitherto shown the effects of the democratic influence chiefly by occupying itself with the first part of this programme, viz., the principles of corporate union between men of the *same* class. But it is now slowly yet surely feeling its way to the adoption of the second part—the principles of corporate union between *different* classes. Under the first head, it has worked out a strong particularist tendency rather than an idea capable of universal application. On the basis of this tendency, it has supplied to the upper classes of English society a worthier principle of association than any by which they were united before, and it has evinced a warm disposition to include also the members of other classes by befriending and assisting them to an extent previously unknown in this or any other country. The second part of the programme is, however, in the main to follow.

Meantime let us be thankful for such signs as are forthcoming of its commencement. Amongst these one of the most hopeful—as we have already intimated—is the fact that the latter day Church has always represented her secular activity as the outcome of her churchmanship. She may not have demonstrated the connection. The word “Church” may be applied to the undertakings in question as a mere *caput mortuum*, from which no new consequences are derived. Still, the fact remains that, though understanding very little of what is meant in the deeper sense by church-membership in reference to the conduct of life, the Church of England has not only never disowned the relationship, but has gloried in it

and has accentuated its importance. This indeed is about as far as our Church has as yet arrived towards bringing theology and life together. As far as it goes, however, it is not to be despised. At all events it is a sufficient proof that the Church is not prepared to make herself too cheap and to buy popularity at all costs.

And, on the other hand, it is not less a hopeful sign of the times that the need of a religious basis for the organisation of charitable and philanthropic agencies and social undertakings of all kinds should be now increasingly felt by many persons who formerly were strong advocates of an exclusively secular system. It is not suggested that the particular religious influence which such persons in most cases desiderate is that of the Church of England, though even in this more limited sense there can be no doubt that there is an improvement, and that every year there is more demand for the good offices of the Church, and that in the most unlooked-for quarters. The ground of hope which we cherish as regards the future of the Church of England is derived rather from the observation of a growing preference for the organisation of society on religious principles, whether as professed by Churchmen, Dissenters, Salvationists, or undenominationalists. It may not be—and it is most unlikely that it will be—the Church's present narrow profession of such principles which will ultimately find favour with the great masses of the English people. But it is none the less an encouragement to those who look forward to the prevalence of a more enlightened churchmanship, that the way should be in process of being made more easy for such a result by a preliminary preparation for it in the shape of an enhanced sense of the importance of religion in human affairs.

The point, however, which we desire to establish is, that the Church laity cannot but be influenced by its activity in these various directions, cannot be the same after it as it was before, cannot resemble in its



exclusiveness and indifference to popular interests the laity of those old days of class-government spoken of above. And our further point is, that this democratic spirit, this sense of the solidarity of class interests, will not merely enter more and more into every *social* project of the Church laity, but, as the result of this, will enter more and more into the determination of the forms of religion regarded by the Church laity as the most acceptable, not merely to itself but to the community as a whole. It is very unlikely that a determination of religion arrived at in this way will be of the nature of a compromise in any undesirable sense. It is rather to be expected that it will be a simple and faithful reflection of the mind of a united nation.

We have been looking far ahead. The immediate outlook of course stops far short of this. Meantime, in order for this view to seem even plausible, it is desirable before concluding to say a few words as regards what, to many, will probably seem the chief crux, viz., the difficulty, not so much of popularising the English Church as of doing so without the sacrifice of its association with learning, and of the manifold other attractions by which it is endeared to the educated and cultivated classes. With regard to this question, we would remark that it is a question which concerns not only the future of our Church, but of *all* our institutions and inherited possessions. Now it is not a fiction but a sober truth, that the experience of the last few years has been full of encouragement on this point, and that even the most timid have felt very much reassured as regards the appreciativeness of the Demos. This has been so at least wherever (but not otherwise) the Demos has been brought into contact with persons at once of superior intelligence and of genuine sympathy. But what enables us to hope for further improvement in this direction is not only the receptivity of the comparatively uneducated ; it is also the immense improvement in the *means*

placed at the disposal of the educated classes for the purpose of enlightening the ignorant and elevating the outcast and poor. There never was a time when there was so much sound and useful and easily accessible knowledge disseminated abroad, or when relief agencies for the ills of suffering humanity were better devised or more carefully administered.

We will conclude with one and only one caution. The aim is not to change the character of the Church of England, but to adapt it to new conditions. Those who forget what they have to preserve are as far from the truth as those who are unwilling to try new remedies. Constitutional and administrative reforms are often advocated in entire forgetfulness that the Church of England has a character of her own as the result of her past history. The aim of all true Church reform is that this character may be developed and perfected, not that it may be obliterated and destroyed. The measures of reform adopted may be ever so radical, but they must at least take account of the limitations imposed on the Church by her inherited position, and they must not sacrifice *beyond a certain point* the very real advantages of that position to the pursuit of other more remote advantages, even though the latter may in themselves be not less desirable.

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## PART II

### CHURCH AND DISSENT

"In evils that cannot be removed without the manifest danger of greater to succeed in their rooms, wisdom, of necessity, must give place to necessity. All it can do in those cases is to devise how that which must be endured may be mitigated, and the inconveniences thereof countervailed as near as may be ; that when the best things are not possible, the best may be made of those that are."—Hooker, *Ecclesiastical Polity*, Bk. v., ch. ix., sect. i.



## CHAPTER I

### THE RECENT HISTORY OF DISSENT

ENGLISH Nonconformity,<sup>1</sup> however familiar as a fact, has been very little investigated and is very imperfectly understood. This is so, at all events, as regards its recent development and present state. No doubt under its more historical aspects, especially as regards the struggles of Nonconformists for religious liberty, and as regards the earlier phases of the Methodist movement, it has received a considerable amount of attention. But the important changes which Dissent has undergone during the present century have been either passed over, or have been discussed in an unsatisfactory manner.

And even as regards what occurred previously, far too much weight is usually attached to the consideration that Dissent from the Anglican Communion might have been averted by less narrowness on the part of Churchmen and by more reasonableness on the part of Nonconformists. Of course, it might. If men were better than they are, all sorts of good results might have happened which have not happened. The question, however, is whether religious dissent

<sup>1</sup> Where the point of the distinction between Dissent and Nonconformity is not in question, the two terms are used in the following pages interchangeably. The distinction, itself, however, is for practical purposes obsolete.

is not the necessary accompaniment of religious liberty, and whether, if the concession of this latter both could not and ought not to have been any longer delayed, differences of opinion leading not merely to dissension but also to "dissent" were not inevitable. It does not follow from this that everything which calls itself "Dissent" was inevitable. What we have to do rather is, to distinguish the Dissent which is real and permanent from that which is due to accidental causes, and another fault we have to find with the generality of writers on this subject is that they do not draw this distinction.

In conducting the present discussion, it is desired to bear in mind the following three simple and yet often neglected cautions.

In the first place, to be careful to regard Dissent as a religious phenomenon, and not merely as a thing capable of being explained by reference to social causes. It is no doubt true that social considerations do affect the position of Dissent more or less in all cases, whilst in some they are almost sufficient to account for its existence. Cases of the latter kind are, however, the exception. As a rule, these social considerations are to be treated as qualifying those which arise out of the religious aspects of Dissent, and not *vice versa*.

Secondly, to abstain from the imputation of low and unworthy motives and to avoid partisanship, whether on behalf of Church or Dissent. There is much in the conduct of Dissenters, as there is likewise in that of Churchmen, which we cannot admire; but nothing is gained by calling attention to examples of such conduct. Dissent is not such an objectionable phenomenon as is supposed by some Churchmen, nor so highly to be admired as is supposed by some Non-conformists. In point of fact, as the subsequent inquiry will show, Church and Dissent have been much more subject to common influences, and much less determined by the characteristics peculiar to each,

than is commonly admitted by the partisans of either side.

Thirdly, to attach importance not so much to the Nonconformist bodies considered separately, as rather to the great dividing lines which run through them all in common. In any treatment of this subject, it should be remembered that religious phenomena in the present age require to some extent to be grouped afresh, instead of being confined within the denominational limits traditionally assigned to them.

What then is the present condition of English Nonconformity? What are its chief distinguishing features and tendencies? and how is its disposition towards the Church of England thus affected?

Dissent from the Church of England is an old story, the history of which we do not now feel ourselves called on to retrace. That history—except in the case of the Methodists—is interesting previous to the present century chiefly for POLITICAL reasons. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Independents and Baptists—though between them they produced many heroes and some saints—are yet known to us as organisations rather in connection with the struggle for religious liberty than in connection with religion. Soon after the beginning of the present century, however, the Nonconformist societies showed an increase of activity as RELIGIOUS agencies.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A D. 1800. "Nearly all classes of Dissenters were now rapidly increasing in number." (Skeats, *History of the Free Churches of England*, p. 529.) Speaking of the Established Church at this date, the same not wholly unbiassed writer says that, "with the exception of the Evangelical section—now numbering perhaps nearly a thousand ministers—it is not an exaggeration to say that personal religion and a personal sense of duty were almost unknown amongst them." (*Ibid.* p. 527.) Dr. Stoughton, whilst admitting the low state to which the Church had sunk at the beginning of the century, adds with his usual candour, "Nor can it be said that the Establishment alone was responsible. . . . There was much neglect on the part



But it was not until after the year 1830, *i.e.*, at about the beginning of the Oxford Movement and the new era of mechanical invention and political enfranchisement, that the Dissenters—more especially the Congregationalists and the Baptists—began to become really considerable in numbers and to acquire a widespread influence.

This new movement of Dissent differed from the previous Methodist movement in being very little, if at all, due to the spiritual apathy of the Church of England. That Church was in fact herself engaged in taking up a new position at the same time. Undoubtedly, however, the tardy awakenment of the National Church to the PRACTICAL wants of the time was a source of strength to the Dissenters. Or rather, we should say, that as the Church addressed herself to meet one set of wants and the Dissenters another, the IMMEDIATE advantage lay on the side of those who aimed at satisfying the more immediate wants. Now, the wants most felt were those which the Dissenters were the first in the field to satisfy, *e.g.*,

of the old Dissent." On the other hand, after 1830, there was a more real revival, which is thus sketched by Dr. Stoughton. "Taking a broad glance at the 'three denominations,' it must be acknowledged that increasing energy at the time I am speaking of more or less marked each of them. They rose to higher resolves, to nobler achievements. The passing of Parliamentary and Municipal Reform Bills caused an increase of political influence amongst Dissenters. In large towns successful merchants and tradesmen came to the front. If old Nonconformist families declined or expired in some districts, especially the rural ones, new families arose, enriched by improved manufactures and more enterprising commerce. The Corn Law agitation brought increased social power to Dissenters in some places; spiritual influences already described or hereafter to be pointed out were far more mighty factors in the happy change. The common result was an amount of liberality and effort in the support of missions, in the building of chapels, and in the employment of agencies, public and private, which would have astonished immeasurably the representation of the old Dissent."—*Religion in England*, vol. ii. p. 152.

more ministers of religion, more places of worship, and a more popular and congregational FORM of worship. It is not intended to deny that the Church of England had made and was then making efforts to satisfy these wants—more especially in the matter of church building. But little that was done seems to have been of a kind calculated to popularise the Church, which was what was wanted. The immensely greater part of the Church's activity in this latter direction was not anterior, but subsequent, to the period of Dr. Hook's incumbency at Leeds (1837—1859). No doubt in more recent times the Church of England has done her best to supply the desiderata above mentioned. But the class of questions with which she occupied herself at the beginning of the Oxford Movement was altogether different. For that movement, in its inception, was chiefly absorbed in the endeavour to do battle against the rationalism and infidelity of the age—was in fact one of many contemporary forms of reaction against the tendencies of the French Revolution.

It may no doubt be contended that the Church has in the long run profited by making it her first business to elaborate afresh her doctrinal and ecclesiastical position. Nor can the necessity and opportuneness of SOME such attempt—whatever may be thought of the particular one initiated—be denied. But the Dissenters, whose aims at the time of which we are speaking were essentially practical, unquestionably achieved a considerable *immediate* success, and that not least of all because the new forces in the Church tended for the time in a different direction. Dissent was, indeed, helped in this way, not only negatively and indirectly, but also *positively*, through the supply of a weapon afforded to it to be used against the Church of England in the form of a protest against Romanism. For whatever may be thought about the Oxford or Tractarian Movement now, it was, undoubtedly, then popularly regarded as

intended to reunite the Church of England with the Church of Rome.

The Dissent which we have now under review was strictly orthodox. As to the particular forms of orthodoxy there was often considerable controversy, but there was no party to any such controversy who would not have resented the imputation of anything like *unorthodoxy*, much less of unbelief. This may seem surprising, not only when we consider the wholesale uprooting of old ideas which was in progress during the same epoch on the Continent, but also, and perhaps still more, when we reflect that the Dissent of the early part of the Victorian era was to all intents and purposes a new phenomenon. For though nominally capable of being affiliated to seventeenth century Puritanism and eighteenth century Sectarianism, it had in reality little dependence on historical associations and was essentially an outgrowth of contemporary civilisation. No doubt the Dissenters of this period were sincerely evangelical, but it was the evangelicalism of a class which had come into existence at a most critical stage of industrial development, and which was intensely conscious both of its own grievances and of its own recently acquired power to redress them. From this, coupled with the fact that the age was—as has been already remarked—a revolutionary one, it might have been expected that the Dissenters in question would have made some changes in the current orthodoxy.

That this did not happen, was due amongst other causes to the essentially conservative proclivities of the English middle classes at this epoch. For in England, though in a less degree than in some other countries, there was amongst the middle classes a dominant prepossession of danger arising from the artisan class and from the proletariat, and this apprehension extended not merely to such ideas as afterwards found expression in the Chartist Movement, but

included also the possibility of a removal of the old religious landmarks and a consequent destruction of the whole fabric of society. This was simply a form of terrorism haunting the middle classes of society at that time, and must not be regarded as showing any insight into the negative and critical tendencies of modern thought. Yet it is interesting to note as an illustration of that common ground existing between Church and Dissent which has been already insisted upon, that in the Dissent not less than in the Churchmanship of this period there was a strong conservative element, however different in the two cases may have been the form which it assumed and the consequences in which it issued.

Though, however, during the period of which we are now speaking there was no question amongst Nonconformists as regards the first principles of religious belief, there was no lack of controversy on other subjects. The fiercest of such disputes which took place during the second quarter of the present century were those which arose amongst the Methodists, the result being the formation of certain new sects hereafter to be noticed. But the older Nonconformist societies were likewise frequently agitated by internal strifes and dissensions, though in their case this did not lead to ecclesiastical separation. In the former case, as might be expected from the fact that the Methodists were of comparatively recent origin, the controversies engendered had reference for the most part to questions of Church discipline, *e.g.*, as regards synodical action, the position relatively to each other of ministers and laymen, and other like questions. On the other hand, the controversies in the second case were chiefly theological, and arose generally out of attempts made by members of the rising generation to adjust the traditional Calvinism to more modern ways of thinking. In neither case do the controversies in question seem to have checked the spread of the Dissenting movement, starting

from 1830. That movement continued to make progress on substantially the same lines for the next twenty years, and indeed it was not for a considerably longer time that the new influences by which it was ultimately modified, made themselves felt so as to be clearly discerned.

These new influences—the operation of which on the Nonconformist bodies it will be our next duty to consider—are characterized by Dr. Stoughton as follows:— “A change wide and deep came over the domain of religious thought during the middle of this century. It was a change different from any one before. It presented phenomena of a startling kind, breaking down old hedges and defacing old landmarks, so that in walking the theological round we hardly know where we are.”<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Stoughton does not of course mean that the dissenting bodies were to any great extent affected by the changes here referred to so early as the year 1850. For at that date the new tendencies of which he speaks had scarcely begun to operate even in the quarters most sensitive to the influences of modern thought. What he means is, that the ideas which have since made themselves felt so widely and so deeply, had in the year 1850 originated.

How then has Dissent changed its character in times more recent than those described? and what are the causes which have produced this change? We will endeavour to answer these questions by taking Dissent such as it has come to be in these latter days—dating from 1860—or at all events from somewhere in the decade 1860–1870—and comparing it with Dissent, such as it had been previously. For Dissent in recent times differs from the older Dissent not less than the full blown Anglo-Catholic Church of to-day differs from the Church of England a half-century ago. The more, in fact, we look into the matter

<sup>1</sup> *Religion in England*, Vol. ii. p. 436.

the more we shall recognise the truth of Principal Tulloch's remark made in his last published work. "With the year 1860, at the latest, a series of new lines of religious thought set in."

In order to understand this in reference to our present subject, let us compare the dissensions within Dissent which occurred previously to 1860 with the difficulties in the way of Dissent which have occurred since. Until, then, within the last twenty-five or thirty years ago, in cases of dissent arising amongst Dissenters, the dissentient minority either became reconciled with its opponents—if not completely, at all events sufficiently to secure a *modus vivendi* such as the Congregationalist principle easily lent itself to—or else established itself on a new denominational basis, though without changing, except in matters of mere detail, either its religious profession or its ecclesiastical practice. Instances of this latter kind are amongst the Scotch Presbyterians, the Church of the Secession (1733), and the Church of the Disruption (1843);<sup>1</sup> amongst the Methodists, all that host of secessions which occurred between the year 1797, when the "Methodist New Connection" first detached itself from the older society, and the year 1849, when the "Wesleyan Reform Association" (afterwards united with the Wesleyan Association into one body called "the United Free Church Methodists") separated itself on a question of Church discipline. Instances of the former, or non-secessionist, kind are furnished by the internal dissensions which have taken place at various times amongst the Independents and Baptists. The Baptists, it is true, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries manifested strong SECESSIONIST tendencies (General and Particular Baptists, Anabaptists, Seventh Day Baptists, Scotch

<sup>1</sup> Neither the "Secession" nor the "Disruption" are cases of "Dissent arising amongst Dissenters," but rather of Dissent from an Established Church. None the less, however, they serve to illustrate the Secessionist form of Dissent, which is the point here in question.

Baptists, and the "New General Baptist Association") which to some extent have permanently continued, and therefore it might seem more natural to refer them to the FIRST of the two classes above distinguished. But, as against this, it must be remembered that these Baptist divisions have for the most part disappeared, indeed, except as regards the General<sup>1</sup> and Particular Baptists (the difference between whom was really at the bottom of the smaller controversy as to open and restricted communion in the famous Norwich case, 1860) we may say almost wholly so. What Dr. Stoughton says of the Baptists during the earlier part of the century (1800-1830) has probably remained true of them more or less since, and quite justifies us, therefore, in including them in the class of non-Secessionist communions:—

"There is more unity in Baptist history than in the history of Independents during the early part of the century. Baptists have stronger sympathies with each other, for their denominational zeal rallied round one distinct institute the name of which ever shone on their banners. They for the most part co-operated more intimately, and with less division of organisation and action, perhaps with a greater amount of *esprit de corps*; moreover, to any one writing their history at the period they supply links of connection in three controversies which they carried on without destroying denominational unity. The Hyper-Calvinistic Controversy, the Communion Controversy, and the Serampore Controversy, were so many family discussions."

If this be so, the common idea, adopted by Mr. Curteis in his Bampton Lectures,<sup>2</sup> that the Baptists are remarkable for their tendency to sectarian subdivision, must be incorrect.

Similarly, amongst the Independents there was much dissension, but not much "dissent." A great part, indeed, of the lives of some of the most eminent

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.*, General Baptists of the New Connection. General Baptists (Unitarian) have now sunk to extremely small proportions, besides that their connection with other Baptists is scarcely more than nominal.

<sup>2</sup> *Bampton Lectures*, pp. 227-228.

Independent ministers of the generation now just passing away was spent in endeavouring to emancipate their congregations from the burdens of an antiquated Calvinism, and in the process of making this endeavour, not a few of them were regarded by their co-religionists as renegades and apostates from the true faith. Such men succeeded in many cases, not only in dispelling this latter idea, but also in bringing round their congregations to their own point of view, and if the outside public were acquainted with the history of these dissensions, they would probably admit that as much bitterness and mutual antagonism were often provoked by them as by those controversies which in the case of other religious denominations led to actual secession.

Now, these cases of difference and division—whether leading to denominational schism or otherwise—are too often made the subject of merely superficial reflections on the “dissidence of dissent” which they are supposed to illustrate. But considering all the circumstances under which these sectarian dissensions, divisions, and subdivisions, have taken place, and the disadvantages through want of education and other causes under which the parties concerned have laboured, we ought not to be more surprised at the multiplication of differences between the various sections of religious denominations than at their co-existence within the same communion and their mutual co-operation, which latter has been much more frequent than is commonly believed.

This question is not, however, that with which we are now concerned. OUR point is, that whereas until within twenty-five or thirty years ago the inclination of Dissent was towards ecclesiastical differentiation accompanied by a sufficient amount of INTEGRATION to prevent the sectional divisions in each case from falling asunder—*i.e.*, enough unity to prevent religious separation, but not enough to prevent aggravated internal dissensions in some cases and denominational



schism in others—this tendency, though during the last twenty-five or thirty years it has not ceased to operate, has not operated to anything like the same extent that it did formerly. During this more recent period, the situation may be summarised by saying that neither the differentiation nor the integration have made much appreciable progress.

Let us examine the two parts of this statement separately.

1. As regards the differentiation. It does not seem to us too much to say that in Great Britain (in America it is otherwise) sects have not multiplied their divisions to any considerable extent during the last quarter of a century. The most marked feature of orthodox British Christianity in recent times is also the surest indication of a desire to quicken what is dead in existing sectarian formations, rather than to increase their number. We refer, of course, to revivalism, whether home-grown or imported. In every sect and denomination this new influence has made itself felt under some form or other, and wherever this phenomenon has appeared, it has shown itself indifferent to sectarian rivalries. Again, in our own days, many of the smaller religious denominations,—notably the Quakers, Unitarians,<sup>1</sup> Irvingites—are fast on the decline. The Plymouth Brethren, who probably are gaining ground, form an exception only because their programme is professedly unsectarian, though very far from being so in actual fact. Nor must we be deceived by the formidable list of denominations and sects which has been collected

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.*, the Unitarians understood in a strictly denominational sense. In an undenominational sense—*i.e.*, as including whatever religious freethinkers care to avail themselves of this name—Unitarianism is not on the decline. The term since 1866, when the British and Foreign Unitarian Association refused to add to its rules a clause defining the meaning of Unitarian Christianity, has become more and more vague and general. But this circumstance rather supports than goes against the conclusion above maintained.

from the certified returns made to the Registrar-General, and which appears in most of the current books of reference. For in the vast majority of cases the sects mentioned in these returns are both numerically, and also as regards the extent of their influence, undeserving of notice. As a matter of fact the returns in question avowedly indicate only the names of persons on whose behalf "places of meeting for religious worship in England and Wales" have been duly certified. Apart from this consideration, however, sects and denominations which have no permanent place in the religious life of the nation are not practically worth taking into account. But in the larger Nonconformist bodies there have been latterly no new sectional formations; no further dissent therefore. Nor has there been much active dissension, at least (and we would have this well observed) not of the kind referred to above, *i.e.*, dissension within the limits of orthodoxy, and as regards principles admitted by two parties in common, but differently interpreted by each.

It appears, therefore, that that tendency towards differentiation which had hitherto been so characteristic of the Nonconformist Churches is not just now on the increase. We do not wish to draw from this fact—supposing it to be admitted—any of the conclusions, either on the one side or the other, which it might seem to suggest. On the one hand, we are far from arguing on the strength of this evidence that the dissenting interest is not now in a flourishing condition. There can be no question as to the vitality and activity of Dissent even in England, whilst in Wales it is, "though not legally, yet in every other sense, the established religion." Nor, on the other hand, is the view here maintained that to which some Nonconformists might incline—*viz.*, that Dissent in its present state is shown to be perfect by the fact of there being no further dissidence. Against this assumption of perfection and finality it will presently

be contended that the phenomenon in question is due to quite other causes. At the point we have now reached, however, all that is necessary is to insist on the simple fact that what is called the dissidence of dissent does not seem to be on the increase.

2. As regards the *integration*. If during the last twenty-five or thirty years there has not been much further DIFFERENTIATION of the Nonconformist bodies, so neither has there been much increased tendency towards INTEGRATION. For some considerable time past, in fact, the sects have remained pretty much where they were; the dividing lines between them have not ceased to exist, nor has there been any comprehensive movement towards readjustment or mutual absorption. There has been nothing in the recent history of Dissent to correspond with the Catholic or pseudo-Catholic tendency of the latter-day Church of England. In this respect, indeed, the dissenting organisations show less capacity now than they did some forty or fifty years ago, when a greater strain was put upon them to resist the formation of new sects. Even the union for certain purposes of the "three denominations"—loose as it was—acted as a more real bond of connection between Nonconformists than any which exists now. It is not so much that the dissenting denominations are now opposed, as that they are indifferent to each other. They are no doubt bound together more or less by common dislike of the Church; but this feeling springs from too different motives in the case of different classes of Dissenters (as will shortly be explained) to serve as a strong cementing influence except for political purposes, and even for these purposes the cement is not always to be relied on. It is a common remark that Nonconformists are as much separated from each other as they are from the Church, and this remark, though like others of its kind somewhat too highly coloured, must yet on the whole be pronounced to be true. At any rate, the various denominations of

Dissent are not making up their differences either internally or in relation to each other, though, as we have shown, they are not ADDING to them.

What, then, is the reason of this comparative stationariness of the Nonconformist bodies of to-day?

If the tendency of Dissent were very decidedly towards unity OR towards difference, it might be explained as a one-sided exhibition of one or other of the two most marked features of the contemporary development of civilisation which, on the one hand, seems to endeavour to combine and unite men in large aggregations, whilst, on the other hand, it imparts to the union thus effected a strongly marked sectional and particularist character. Dissent, however, as has just been shown, has not latterly made any great advance in either of these directions. Nor does it appear from what has been said that contemporary Dissent is a COMPROMISE between these two tendencies. What does appear is, that there is in the Dissenting communities at the present time, on the one hand, a keenly felt desire for comprehensiveness, on the other hand, a not less decided predilection for intensive exclusiveness, but that these two manifestations co-exist without either to any great extent amalgamating or developing separately.

In order to explain this, we must examine somewhat more carefully into the present position and significance of Dissent, both internally and as regards the Church of England. But first let it once more be distinctly understood that it is not in the least intended to represent that English Nonconformity is in a state of collapse or that it is otherwise than prosperous, *i.e.*, as an *ad hoc* attempt to meet the religious wants of large classes of the community. What is here aimed at is, to form an estimate of Dissent in regard to its ultimate basis and durability. That Dissent is for practical purposes an influential factor at the present time no one denies or can deny. The remarks here offered, however, have reference only to the character of Dissent as a permanent force

Now, in that former period of which we have been speaking, the dissensions within Dissent—if we may use the expression—were caused, as has been already observed, either by differences on the great Calvinistic controversy, which, in some form or other, has divided almost all the sects, or else by differences on questions of Church discipline. In recent times, the controversies agitating the Nonconformist societies have been of an altogether different kind; they have turned mainly on questions connected with the negative and critical tendencies of modern thought. It is not so much that the Nonconformist bodies have been avowedly and directly occupied with the issues thus presented. Rather, in order to appreciate the true nature of the situation and to understand its significance, one must read between the lines of the presidential addresses, and take note of the proceedings, at Congregational and Baptist Unions, and, further, one must acquaint one's self with the theological opinions held by dissenting ministers and lay members of dissenting denominations. It is not enough to have recourse to outward signs and public professions on the part of Nonconformists themselves, significant as many of these are. The tendency is a slowly growing one, making itself felt more in its effect on the foundations than by disturbing the surface. There can, indeed, be little doubt that all religious denominations in England are at present divided by controversies of this kind to a much greater extent than is commonly supposed. And it is, perhaps, better that the view here taken should be stated thus generally, in order that there may be no imputation of that aim so justly deprecated by Mr. Guinness Rogers, the aim, viz., of trying "to obtain an advantage over a rival by whispering suspicions of its loyalty to Christ."<sup>1</sup>

But if it be true, as we think it is, that the Nonconformity of to-day differs from that of times past by being concerned with a different class of questions, it

<sup>1</sup> *Church Systems of the Nineteenth Century*, p. 646.

is not surprising that the "dissidence of Dissent" within the Nonconformist bodies should likewise be different. As long as the divisions between the parties comprising sects were based on mere theological or ecclesiastical differences, there was room for the multiplication of new forms of Dissent within the same religious communion. The new and the old parties then contend merely as to which is the best representative of a given theological or ecclesiastical principle, recognised by both but differently interpreted by each. When, however, the variation goes further than this, there ceases to be any basis left for the further multiplication of sectional divisions. The revolutionary party, or rather the persons who compose this party (for their position, being a negative one, does not give occasion to combination) must then either come to terms, or else must join the ranks of the outsiders. But the difficulty of coming to terms in the supposed case is almost insuperable, and as, *ex hypothesi*, the differences have gone too far for dissent within the same communion to be felt as a relief, the course most naturally recommended to the extreme section is that of complete and absolute separation. Not that this latter course has as yet been adopted by Nonconformists of advanced views at all generally. The difficulty makes itself felt, as has been already observed, in an underground way rather than by conspicuous and manifest signs ; it is everywhere a cause of disquietude and apprehension, though in some quarters attempts may be made at a compromise, and the ill-feeling aroused may be smothered, even if only half concealed. This, then, is our explanation of the change which has passed over the chief Nonconformist bodies in recent times as regards the stationariness, if not the diminution of sectarian divisions.

On the other hand, it is not difficult to explain the fact that the sects have not recently become internally consolidated, much less have tended to mutual absorption. Religious differences, however slight in themselves, when they have once been

admitted and been made the basis of separation between large bodies of men, have never at any time been afterwards cancelled except with the greatest difficulty. Yet in earlier ages this was sometimes possible by means of the application of force and the practice of persecution. Where, however, as at present, freedom of thought is allowed to extend itself to its utmost conceivable limits, these differences, once publicly recognised, are instantly multiplied into a variety of others. Not merely the original difference, therefore, but the whole development of thought which has sprung from it, must be made to disappear, before there can be a way opened to reunion. But the Nonconformist bodies, not being included in an all-comprehensive Church, when, after multiplying their divisions, the time came for them to unite and combine, were unable even to approach each other for this purpose. And this applied not merely to the denominational divisions of Dissent, but to the subdivisions of each of these ; in no case of this kind was there any one to take the first step, and, if there had been, such action would almost certainly have been resented. Moreover, the recent growth of Congregationalism (which even in Churches in which the congregational form of Church government is not the one recognised, is so remarkable<sup>1</sup>) has acted as a further preventive to any efforts on the part of the Dissenters in the direction of union. This new congregational impetus had been anticipated and prepared for by the Church of England, and when it came therefore it acted in that quarter rather as a differentiating factor than as a disturbing one. But amongst the Nonconformists, though for the reasons above specified it did not increase the dissidence of Dissent, it could not but intensify the dissidence already existing.

<sup>1</sup> See below pp. 124-126. In recent times the growth of congregationalism in the Church of England has been more remarkable than its maintenance amongst the Congregationalists themselves.

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## CHAPTER II

### ATTRACTION AND REPULSION.

SUCH, then, is the present position of the Non-conformist bodies in England and in a great measure also of the Presbyterian Churches, established and free, in Scotland. There are, however, differences. These differences exist not so much between the various denominations as between two chief tendencies more or less at work amongst them all. Amongst all of them the root of the matter is this apprehension of which we have spoken. But there is a disposition in some orthodox quarters of Dissent, to attempt to meet the difficulties referred to, not indeed by a relaxation of doctrinal or ecclesiastical uniformity, but by the reduction of theological belief to its most primitive evangelical elements, these latter being then represented as not merely consistent with, but as necessary to, a healthy social state and an advanced political Liberalism. This is very much the position taken up by the more liberal of the orthodox Dissenters, especially amongst the Congregationalists or Independents. It is, indeed, a position which has much to recommend it in the eyes of that large class of Englishmen who abhor theological subtleties but are yet unwilling to dispense with religion, which latter they regard rather as a civilising agency in the world than under its more personal and devotional



aspects. "In its own way," says Mr. Guinness Rogers, "it is as English as the Anglican Church. The spasmodic and sensational style of religious thought is not in harmony with the genius of the system. It is ready to welcome new ideas, and to look at the old faith in the light which they throw upon it. Especially, it is careful to discriminate between the primary doctrines of the Gospel and those subsidiary ones which fringe round the central truth, but are not of the essence of Christianity. It expects variety, it encourages liberty, it tolerates wide differences of opinion, but it holds fast by the simplicity that is in Christ."<sup>1</sup>

The holders of this view have many advantages not usually enjoyed in combination. They can gird at "the advocates of a more organised Christianity"<sup>2</sup> as likewise at "those who identify pietistic conceptions and millenarian theology with the evangelical creed."<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, Congregationalism, though "freer in character, spirit, and method than any other Church system"<sup>4</sup> presents this singular phenomenon that "nowhere is there more independence than among its ministers, yet nowhere is there more general agreement."<sup>5</sup>

This tendency of orthodox Dissent is strongly marked amongst the Congregationalists, but prevalent also more or less widely in the other chief English Non-conformist associations, as likewise, though to a much less extent, amongst the Presbyterians—no matter to which body belonging—in Scotland. No doubt, much of our popular religion, and probably that part of it which is of the most manly and practical type, embodies itself under this form. And yet it is not here that the hopes of the future lie concealed. The very strength of this tendency is in fact largely due to its transitional character. In itself, it is a *via media*, the inconsistencies of which are far more

<sup>1</sup> *Church Systems of the Nineteenth Century*, p. 647.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 641. <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 647. <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 646. <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p. 647.

striking and far less intelligible than are those of the Church of England. Those who maintain this view have no clear idea as to what they mean by the necessary conditions of agreement amongst Christians, nor do they tell us how they understand the relation between fundamentals and non-essentials, nor do they give any indication of what they consider the limits either of sectional or individual liberty. It is impossible therefore to believe that we have here more than a temporary makeshift in religion. And in point of fact this religious profession is as *well* adapted to meet the wants of a certain class of men under present circumstances, as it is *ill* adapted to satisfy the permanent spiritual aspirations of mankind at large.

But there is another tendency of Dissent at the present time, which, though proceeding from the same cause and intended to meet the same difficulty, issues in a wholly different result. As distinguished from the last, it is an intensive and an exclusive tendency. The prevailing scepticism and infidelity have the effect in this case of driving men to define their position more closely and to unite together on a more definite basis of religious particularism. Dissenters of this class, though not numerically so strong as in the other case, are yet in proportion to their numbers far more influential. This is a tendency more or less characteristic of all religious denominations at the present time, Church and Dissent included ; nor do we by any means intend to except those forms of dissent, whether Congregationalist or otherwise, which are governed also by the first tendency previously described. These two lines of thought in fact coexist, and are far more the dividing forces of the contemporary religious world than are any of those divisions—often mere survivals from a past age—which are supposed to divide.

Now, this tendency has often existed in a separatist form, giving rise to new sectarian divisions, whether

as a reaction against excessive ecclesiastical organisation or against laxness and indifferentism. Such a reaction was that in the seventeenth century of the Baptists and the Quakers who, though, as Mr. Curteis well points out, inclining in opposite directions (the one relying solely on *inward* light, the other on the imposition of a more adequate *external* test of Church membership), were animated by a common desire to protest against and, if possible, to remedy the ecclesiastical evils of their time. This, however, was in an age of ecclesiastical, rather than of strictly theological or religious, contention. At the present time, protests by way of reaction do not usually take the form of ecclesiastical separation, and, just as we saw that in the case of the first or more liberal tendency of dissent there was no separatist inclination, but rather an assertion of orthodoxy on lines of more primitive simplicity, so we note in connection with this second or ultramontane tendency a similar repugnance to secession. And we ascribe this result in both cases not to any *real* diminution in the bitterness of feeling between the sections of these larger religious denominations which succeed in holding together notwithstanding their differences, but rather to the felt sense of a common danger, which, if it is not strong enough to bind them to each other in vital union, is at least sufficient to prevent them from parting asunder. Nowadays, the ultra-orthodox and liberal sections of religious denominations, though engaged on different tasks (the one in trying to exclude, the other in trying to conciliate, the advanced section which belongs to neither of them) are yet *both* intent on a common object, viz. the healing of a sore place in their midst; it is this which calls away their attention from each other, which causes them to ignore their former differences or to regard them as insignificant in comparison with the threatened secession of their supporters, equally of both sections, on "independent" grounds.

Such being the state of feeling prevalent amongst Nonconformists, or amongst large classes of them, at the present time, let us next proceed to inquire how the attitude of Dissent towards the Church of England is determined by the considerations above advanced. In other words, how, in respect of the two tendencies referred to, is the Church of England brought into contact with the Nonconformist bodies?

First, then, what is the attitude of the broader tendency of religious dissent towards the Church of England?

Up to a certain point these Broad-Church Dissenters are disposed towards the Church of England very favourably. Not of course that they sympathise with Anglo-Catholicism, or with what is known as the Sacramental system. All their traditional inclinations are in a different, not to say opposite, direction from that which has been taken by the Church of England in recent years. But under a more general aspect, there is considerable sympathy between these two ecclesiastical tendencies. Different as is the form which they assume respectively, they yet have this in common, that they both aim at comprehension within the limits of what each believes to be orthodoxy. That unifying and consolidating energy shown by the Church of England in one direction, in spite of the most extreme exclusiveness in another, has in a certain sense, though of course in a very different sense, its counterpart in the efforts of Dissenters belonging to this more liberal class to reduce points of difference between themselves and others to their very lowest terms consistently with adherence to the faith of Christ. "It has been a matter of complaint with some," says Mr. Guinness Rogers,<sup>1</sup> "that the recent meetings of the Congregational Union have been marked by a spirit so revolutionary, that it seemed to proceed on the idea

<sup>1</sup> Essay on "The Congregationalism of the Future," in *Ecclesia*. Essays edited by H. R. Reynolds, D.D. P. 474.

that there is nothing in our principles and institutions which can be regarded as definitely settled, but that everything is in a state of fusion, waiting to be cast into any new shape which men with Presbyterian, or Methodist, or Plymouth Brethren proclivities may desire to give it." This disposition is, as was above remarked, different from that which we have described as characteristic of the method pursued by the Church of England, the latter being generally more skilful in its choice of means, and especially more apt at combining liberal proclivities with extremely narrow Church principles. But as regards the tendency towards unity and comprehension, there is great similarity between Churchmen and the *more liberal* class of orthodox Dissenters at the present time, and this gives rise to a fellow feeling not less on the one side than on the other, which shows itself on the part of the Dissenters by a sympathetic appreciation of much which is being done by the Church, both as regards the defence of religion and attacks on irreligion, and on the part of Churchmen, by more friendliness and kindness in their relations with those who are thus willing to meet them half way, and to associate with them for objects which as Christians they have in common.

If, then, this feeling prevails, as it certainly does, not only amongst *leading* Churchmen and Dissenters, but also generally amongst the constituent members of these two classes, why should there be anything more to be said on the other side? Why is it that many of the same Dissenters who entertain these friendly sentiments towards the Church are also on other grounds bitterly opposed to the Church and unable to combine with her except to a very limited extent?

There can, unfortunately, be no doubt as to the answer to this question. What makes the sympathy of these Dissenters with the liberal attitude taken up by the Church only a half-hearted one, is the sense

that the Anglicans who talk of comprehension are not sincere in offering it, since they have no idea of extending it to Dissenters except on condition of an entire surrender of these latter to the Church. But liberal Nonconformists will not consent to these terms, though on many grounds they have great inducements to do so both from within and from without, *e.g.*, from within, on account of growing difficulties as regards their relations with their more narrowly orthodox, as likewise with their more advanced and less orthodox, brethren, and from without, on account of their increased sense of the necessity of a stronger union amongst Christians in opposition to anti-Christian influences.

Now there is no more sensitive irritation than that which is felt by men who are divided by some special circumstance from those with whom on general grounds they desire to be united, and it is certain that the exasperation of many Nonconformists against the Church of England is due to this cause. It may indeed be that the thought of actual union does not at present enter into the motives which determine the attitude of such Nonconformists towards the Church, for union, even on federative lines, has hitherto seemed too little practicable to have much weight with practical men. But the irritating circumstance to Nonconformists of this class arises from their conviction that the progressive inclination of the Church towards liberalism is not half so strong as its progressive inclination towards a self-centred ecclesiasticism. The former is no doubt up to a certain point both sincerely felt and actively manifested, but it can never produce any real approximation, much less vital union, in presence of the increased and increasing importance which is now attached by English Churchmen to their own principles of Church membership. These principles, though not incompatible with a conciliatory attitude of the Church towards Dissent and Dissenters, exclude by their

very nature anything like a religious relationship of a more intimate kind. But without some sort of religious bond of union, mere willingness to co-operate with the Dissenters in matters of purely moral and philanthropic concern, is quite as much calculated to irritate as it is to conciliate the classes in question. It is not merely that in such matters Churchmen are not more liberally disposed towards the Dissenters than they are towards persons who profess no religious belief whatever, but the impossibility of union and co-operation between Church and Dissent in any of the other and deeper matters which religious men have at heart, is thus brought prominently into view.

And there is this further irritating circumstance, that those Dissenters with whom we are now concerned are not nearly so sympathetic to the more *religious* school of English Churchmen as are the more rigidly orthodox, not to say narrow-minded, members of the dissenting community, between whom and their laxer brethren there is at the present time so much uncomfortable friction and felt uneasiness. And this cannot but be a disappointment to Dissenters who are liberally inclined. For they desire a religious *entente* with the Church of England precisely in order to escape from their own narrow surroundings without at the same time breaking with the traditional tenets of Christianity in their more general acceptance. What then must be their feelings when, not only is this desire of theirs not satisfied by the Church of England, but the very thing against which they are in revolt as regards their own coreligionists presents itself as an insuperable obstacle to any advances they might be inclined to make in the Church direction? For what they revolt against in the Church is in a sense the same as what they revolt against in their own particular form of dissent, viz. not the differences as regards certain points either of Churchmen or of Dissenters from themselves, but rather the attempt to represent that the view, in the

one case of Churchmen, in the other of the stricter class of Dissenters, must be accepted as a condition of Church membership. And as this is the objection of these Nonconformists to the Church, so their dislike arising from it is due to the fact that a Church of this kind seems to them to exclude them by its very nature, not only from uniting but also from co-operating with itself, except to a very limited extent. And this, although these Nonconformists have, as we have seen, every reason to wish, and to do, well to the Church, and might even, under certain circumstances, attach themselves to her communion. In other words, the alienation is much more than is supposed that of rejected love.

But we must now consider what we have distinguished as the *second* tendency of Dissent in its relation to the Church of England. As in the first case, so here, the point of view referred to is not limited to any single religious denomination. We have seen that this second tendency aims at establishing the Christian religion on a firmer basis of orthodoxy than that on which it has come to repose in these latter days even amongst professing Christians. Such being the character of this aim, it is obvious that those who have it in view will be disposed towards the Church of England very differently from the other Dissenters above described. The motive of their dislike to the Church of England is indeed the precise opposite of that entertained in the other case. What they object to is the breadth and liberality of the Anglican Communion, whereas, in the other case, the objection, so far from being against anything of this kind, rested rather on the ground that the freedom hoped for was under present conditions impossible, and hence that the talk about it, even if sincerely meant by Churchmen, had no real foundation in fact. The desire of the liberal Dissenters, in short, is for a liberal Church; their complaint is merely that, as matters at present stand, the object of this desire



unrealisable. On the other hand, the ultramontane party amongst the Dissenters do *not* desire a liberal Church or a comprehensive Christianity ; they are in favour of a highly specialised form of doctrine and a strict and exclusive system of Church membership. Hence the recent tendency of the Church of England in this latter direction meets with the approval of this class of Dissenters much more readily than does that other tendency, likewise above remarked upon, the object of which is the conciliation of differences and the comprehension of them within the same Church.

Yet, though there is a certain amount of sympathy on these grounds between Churchmen and the stricter class of Dissenters, it is not intended to suggest that this feeling has exercised any great influence on the relations of the Church of England with the Nonconformist bodies. For it is of the very essence of the disposition here in question, that it cannot easily reconcile itself to the existence of Christianity under any other form than its own. Its bias is towards the union of persons who are *perfectly* agreed both as to principles and details. It has very little idea of a faith held in common which is not of this nature. It regards charity as weakness, and compromise as corruption. If this is the case even in respect of small differences, how much more must it be so in respect of those differences which separate High Church Anglicans from Puritan Evangelicals, such as are now to be found probably in increasing numbers amongst the Baptists and Methodists ? No doubt, as against the assaults of secularism and infidelity, Churchmen and Dissenters of the kind referred to do to some extent act together, and would, we may suppose, do so still more, if this were required by circumstances. No doubt, too, each has borrowed something from the other. More especially, Churchmen have shown no scruples in following the example of Dissenters, preferring, it would seem, to imitate

them rather than the Evangelicals of their own connection.<sup>1</sup> Not to mention points of detail, the whole tendency towards intensive class association in the Church of England has probably a Dissenting origin. But, as we have said, where there is such a great difference of principle, as is here the case, and where, as is likewise here the case, each side regards exact theological agreement as of such essential importance, it is difficult to see how any close approximation or sympathy between them is possible. It must even be esteemed as a piece of good fortune if Church and Dissent are not brought into conflict on these, as we have seen that they are also on other, grounds. For a long time this was actually the case, nor is it by any means altogether a thing of the past even now. Previously to the year 1860, the opposition of Dissent to the Church probably proceeded more from this party among the Dissenters than from that other more liberal one. For example, the Dissenters with whom Dean Hook was brought into contact, and sometimes into conflict, at the time when he was Vicar of Leeds, appear to have belonged chiefly to this class. The Church of England was then, and to some extent is still, regarded by such Dissenters merely as a vague general influence for good, according to that view which the President of the Baptist Union for 1886 denounced as involving an untrue conception of the nature of a Church. "A Church," he said, "is not merely or mainly a society of men

<sup>1</sup> As regards the imitation on the other side, *i.e.* of Churchmen by Dissenters, the use of Anglican forms in public worship, and the greater attention paid to order and decency in matters of external arrangement, so far as these practices are characteristic of the Dissenters (as they very largely are, more especially amongst the Congregationalists), probably result from the more liberal tendency of Dissent rather than from this one. Dissent of the second kind, however, has followed what at any rate was once the Church's manner towards intending seceders and schismatics, as might be shown by illustrations more amusing than edifying.

and women who have resolved to live moral and useful lives, who are sincere in their belief and wish well to one another and their neighbours. None but avowed Christians should be admitted into such a society. That is a Puritan ideal of a Church."

Yet the opposition to the Church of England on these Puritan grounds has of late years to a great extent fallen flat, the reason being that the Church has *likewise* limited herself, has *likewise* made a more decided profession, has *likewise* become more definite. Consequently, the objections of this class of Dissenters to a merely general Church lose much of their force when urged against the Church of England, though they may be and are brought forward with not less technical justice (*i.e.*, from the Puritan point of view) and with not a little justice (from the same point of view) in actual fact, since, not only are the formal conditions of membership of the Anglican Church the same that they always have been, but there are still large numbers of Churchmen who have not specialised themselves in any definite direction, Anglo-Catholic or otherwise. Hence, whilst it is true generally that Dissenters of this type are less inclined to attack the Church than they were formerly, there is still a considerable amount of latent ill-feeling which is apt on occasion to break forth into open hostility.

On the whole, the Church is viewed by these Puritan Dissenters with decidedly mixed feelings. If, on the one hand, they recognise in the Church's work more homogeneity and spiritual oneness, they are likewise, on the other hand, further off than ever from sympathy with the Church's position. Again, if, on the one hand, the coldness of public opinion to objections urged against the Church on the ground of her too great liberality disinclines these Dissenters against urging such objections, they are, on the other hand, though from an opposite point of view to that of their more liberal brethren, increasingly distrustful

of the sincerity of Anglican professions ; they complain that a Church which claims to have one single and simple rule of faith is yet far from enforcing obedience to this rule in actual practice. The conclusion of the whole matter seems to be, that the Church is at once respected by the class of men we are considering on account of her work, and is yet at the same time despised for not freeing herself from what they regard as impediments to the single-minded prosecution of this work ; that in addition to this, the sacramental and sacerdotal system meets with no sympathy from these men and is even liable at times to be bitterly opposed by them ; and finally, that as the result of these causes, there is exhibited by Dissenters thus minded towards the Church sometimes comparative indifference, at other times dislike not very actively shown, occasionally unrepressed and unrelenting hostility.

As regards reunion with the Church, these Dissenters are less open to it than are those of the first class described, both because they attach more importance to their own specific forms of belief, between which and those of the Church there is no *modus vivendi*, and also because the Church, if it continues to be even to the most limited extent the Church of the nation, will become more liberal, which will bring it no doubt more into sympathy with the first, but more into conflict with the second, tendency of Dissent. On the other hand, Dissent of this second kind is more easy for the Church to live with than is Dissent of the first kind, so long as the grievances of this latter are not redressed. The Church may win the respect of the Puritan Dissenters by efforts of self-devotion such as those of which we read in Dean Hook's life ; but, until some reforms have taken place in her constitution, she must encounter the unflinching opposition of the more liberal Dissenters, who will be the more embittered in proportion as they see more in her to

admire, and in proportion as they more and more feel that they would fain come to her but cannot.

There will always be, as indeed (unless repressed by persecution) there always have been, men and women to whom the gathering of themselves together on a restricted basis of communion is a necessity of their spiritual life. Such persons will always tend to become Dissenters from any Church which professes itself, and still more from one which really is, liberal and comprehensive. This is the *permanent* kind of Dissent. Such Dissent, after the concession of religious liberty, becomes established in those rights which long previously it has asserted either secretly or in the face of opposition. On the other hand, there is the Dissent which merely demands some relaxation of the Church's rules as regards compulsory uniformity. Dissenters of this class are not irreconcilable or irrecoverable, and it might conceivably be made possible for them to become members of the Church of England. In other words, there is no hope of conciliating those Dissenters who desire more strictness ; there is at any rate some hope of conciliating those Dissenters who desire more comprehensiveness than the Church at present allows in respect to the terms of her communion.

## CHAPTER III

### THE REUNION QUESTION

THOUGH, however, these two classes of Dissent may be analysed separately, it is impossible to discriminate between them in actual practice to such an extent as to be able to make each class the subject of separate treatment. For neither class would as a class admit the distinction between itself and the other class as regards the matters above referred to, nor would it be possible for an outsider to indicate, except roughly and generally, the dividing lines between them. It is for this reason that though we have analysed Dissent into its two chief factors, and have represented one of them as conceivably capable of being reunited with the Church of England, we are anxious not to be understood to mean that the practical difficulties in the way of reunion may be made light of. There is a strong tendency in this latter direction on the part of persons who have not grasped the true nature of the situation, who are unaware not only how deep-lying, but also how intertwined with fibres, are the roots of religious denominations, and who wrongly imagine that the advance of *certain* parties and sections of Churchmen and Dissenters respectively to each other is evidence of a widespread movement in the same direction. The only justification for a belief in reunion seems to us to arise from the action of outside influences. These, under certain conditions

might, we think, produce an effect of this kind, or might at any rate incite both Churchmen and Dissenters to work together more heartily than they have done with a view to this object.

At the same time, it would be a mistake to suppose that Churchmen and Dissenters are as yet in the way of finding a solution of their differences by means of the extraneous forces above referred to acting upon them both in common and affecting their mutual relations. Looked at with regard to the ultimate future such a solution is no doubt a possibility, perhaps even a probability. But the effect which these outside influences exercise at present seems to be purely and simply negative. They may indirectly and by way of reaction give rise in certain quarters to reconstruction, but their direct tendency is of a disturbing character and such as to put a severe strain upon denominational loyalty. To call attention to this fact and to explain its significance, has thus far been the aim of the present inquiry. It is time now, however, to consider the relations of Church and Dissent less as regards the outside, and more as regards their reciprocal influences.

Unfortunately, we soon come to the end of our resources when the discussion is thus limited. For the controversy between Church and Dissent has become involved in a deadlock, from which there seems to be no possibility of escape so long as we confine our attention to Churchmen and Dissenters alone. This is admitted—whether sorrowfully or otherwise—by both parties alike. It appeared distinctly as the result of what is called the Langham-street Conference. The difficulties on that occasion proceeded rather from the side of the Dissenters, though they were not less recognised as difficulties by the representatives of the Church of England. But those who have recently written or spoken on the Church side have expressed themselves almost always to the same effect. - Two years ago, for example, an

excellent paper on "points of agreement and difference" between Church and Dissent was read at the Rhyl Church Congress by the Rev. H. A. James, Principal of Cheltenham College, and formerly Dean of St. Asaph. Mr. James did not in the least despair of a better understanding and a more cordial co-operation between the two parties, and he showed that even as matters at present stand there has been in many respects a great improvement. But still he confessed himself unable to see how the distinctive differences between the two sides could be bridged over.

"We must face the fact that the Nonconformist, like ourselves, has principles which he will not give up." . . . "The Nonconformist . . . believes the Christian Church to be a wholly spiritual and invisible body whose unity is not touched or imperilled by 'our unhappy divisions.' You and I in the exercise of our reason, or conscience, or faith—call it what you will—accept the voice of the visible Church as representing in the main the voice of God; he, in the exercise of his, honestly rejects that view." . . . "The rejection of infant baptism introduces a difficulty beyond man's reconciliation, one which has its root in two divergent views of the nature of the Church . . . we cannot bridge the difficulty and compromise is impossible." . . . "I have left untouched a point . . . I mean the question of the Christian ministry; of the ordination of the minister and his functions when ordained. I confess that there at present I see no possibility of reconciliation."

As regards Disendowment he says: "If we must buy reunion at such a price it is better not bought at all." . . . "I have only to sum up my conclusions, they are these: of co-operation in purely spiritual work little is possible, we cannot go far in this direction without coming to impassable walls of partition."

Now, it may be said that the above points, though of great importance in themselves, may yet be matched by other points of still greater importance, as to which Churchmen and Nonconformists are agreed. And this is true, and is a truth to which Mr.



James does full justice. Of the agreement of the two sides as regards "the great central verities of the Christian faith, concerning the nature of God, the scheme of redemption, the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit and the truth of revelation," he says that "it is the one bright ray of sunshine lighting up the chaos of disunion, that in these supremely important matters there is little or no divergence of opinion." But then, as Mr. James remarks, and his statement is a most pregnant one, "The fact is that religious rivalries deprive men altogether of the sense of perspective. The important doctrine is not the one which is most vital to the Christian faith as a whole, but the one which the controversialist is most concerned to defend. It avails nothing now to prove to a Baptist, or a Congregationalist, or a Quaker that his principles are right in the main, only that they involve a distorted development, an unnatural prominence of some one disputed point. To the Nonconformist that one point has come to be the keystone of his spiritual edifice and no persuasion in the world will induce him to displace it at your bidding."<sup>1</sup>

As a second example of the point of view from which Churchmen now conceive their relations with Dissenters, may be mentioned a work first published in 1889 and entitled *Church or Chapel? an Eirenicon*, by the Rev. Joseph Hammond. Mr. Hammond was no doubt perfectly serious in calling his book an eirenicon. But for his doing so, however, it may safely be said that no one would have discovered that the book was intended to be of this character. What Mr. Hammond really does is to state the view of

<sup>1</sup> It must, however, in all fairness be admitted that of late years the line of defence adopted by many Churchmen has exposed itself to this same criticism. This is so at all events as regards popular Church defence. The better class of apologists on the Church side are, of course, less subject to partiality and onesidedness than are the corresponding class amongst the Dissenters. It would be strange indeed if, considering their superior advantages, this were not so.

Anglican Churchmanship with great precision and often with considerable force. Nonconformists are then invited to accept this view without modification or compromise, and to confess themselves in the wrong as regards the points in which they differ from Churchmen. There is no suggestion of anything like a give-and-take between the two parties; the demand is for simple capitulation all along the line. This demand is no doubt temperately stated, and the questions brought forward are fairly argued from the writer's own point of view. But it would be impossible to give a better illustration of the *non-possumus* stage which the controversy between Church and Dissent has now reached than that which is furnished by this book. Here is a man gravely addressing himself to the task of acting as a peacemaker and honestly believing himself to be so acting who, nevertheless, comes to the conclusion that the Church can give up nothing, and that the only way to peace lies in the abandonment by Nonconformists of their most distinctive opinions.

The conclusion thus arrived at is that a nearer approach between Churchmen and Dissenters is at present too remote a possibility to be worth considering. To some, however, this conclusion will seem to go too far. It will be said, "There are no REAL difficulties standing in the way. Such difficulty as there is arises merely from the Anglican point of view as such, which, *ex hypothesi*, cannot make terms with, or even recognise what it regards as, schismatical associations. Reunion—or at all events close approximation—is only impossible so long as English Churchmen remain Anglicans. But Anglicanism, though at present the dominant view of English Churchmen, has not always, nor even for the most part since the Reformation, been in this position, nor is it by any means universally accepted by members of the Church of England even now, nor are the formularies and articles of the Church of England exclusively com

mitted to the Anglican view. There is, therefore, no reason why a change should not take place, and those of us who do not believe in Anglicanism may hope and strive for this result, not only in the interests of truth, but also in the interests of reunion between Churchmen and Dissenters." There are, no doubt, large classes of persons who hold this opinion as to the relations of Church and Dissent, and it may be worth while, therefore, briefly to examine into its tenability and reasonableness.

Now, there can be no doubt that the Anglican point of view does not admit theoretically of any compromise between Church and Dissent. Further, there can be no doubt that if the Anglican point of view were abandoned by its supporters, and what the Bishop of Chester calls "Polychurchism" were adopted by them in its stead, an opportunity would be presented for initiating negotiations which, as things now stand, are impossible. But in this latter eventuality we must take into account what would be lost as well as what would be gained. There would be lost—what is of the greatest importance in all negotiations—a representative organ with which to treat. The Church of England is now leavened predominantly by a High Anglican influence. Whatever may be thought of this fact under other aspects, it undoubtedly gives a character of intelligibility to the Church's position which before was wanting to it. And though the position thus taken up by the Church is, as regards Nonconformists, theoretically, an irreconcilable one, this (paradoxical as it may appear) is probably more than compensated for by the more definite formulation of the Church's views and of the minimum extent of her demands. As long as the Church of England was a mere agglomerate of heterogeneous parts, it was impossible for Churchmen and Nonconformists to negotiate with each other without the risk of misunderstanding. No one party or section of Churchmen could speak FOR the rest without

the fear of subsequent repudiation *by* the rest. It may, indeed, be said that there was then no risk of such misunderstanding, since the purpose of the negotiations then entered into was different. For what was then aimed at was, either to ally the Dissenters with some one party in the Church, or else to enable the Dissenters themselves to become a party in the Church, at all events to be admitted to Church membership, even though virtually remaining Dissenters. But granting that the risk of misunderstanding was thus avoided—since the High Churchmen were treated rather as a *quantité négligeable* than as possible parties to, and, therefore, as possible repudiators of, the contract agreed to—this only converted the risk of misunderstanding into the absolute certainty of failure. For even in the fifties and sixties of the present century, the High Church Party was in far too strong a position to be neglected. But whatever may have been the case then, it is scarcely questionable that a multiform Church, with no authority attaching to any ONE of the forms, would not now be likely to attract to itself other bodies of Christians, whilst it would inevitably provoke disunion amongst Churchmen themselves. And, therefore, to abolish Anglicanism—which is just now the prevailing type of English Churchmanship—would not be an advisable step, even if it could be achieved, on the ground that it would deprive the Church of her comparatively single and simple character, as likewise of her representative organ, in the eyes of outsiders.

But if it cannot be granted that the Church of England would be placed in a better position for reunion, or for a more cordial understanding with the Nonconformist societies, by the rejection of Anglicanism, this only means that what the Church of England requires at the present time in reference to the Nonconformists is a definite and distinct profession which these latter can understand, and fr

which they can know what to expect. According to this way of stating the matter, it would seem to be not very material what the profession made by the Church of England was, provided it was recognised as the Church's profession by Nonconformists. But can we go further than this? Can we say that without any surrender of their Anglican professions Churchmen may expect to be further reconciled with their Nonconformist brethren? Of course, as has been already noticed, if, indeed it requires notice, Anglican Churchmen do not recognise the Nonconformist societies as Churches at all, or hold communion with them in that capacity. Still, it might very well happen that if Churchmen of these views were brought into frequent contact and communication with Nonconformists, more might come of it than, judging from their opposite tendencies, would be supposed possible. Nor is there any disinclination on the part of the younger and more active section of the Anglican clergy to form connections and to enter into negotiations with a view to finding points of agreement, whilst at the same time minimising points of difference, between themselves and Nonconformists. We may therefore consider the more liberal attitude which has of late found favour amongst certain sections of advanced Churchmen as a favourable omen. But whether this element of hope will expand and become a really important factor in the situation, it is impossible on the scanty evidence which at present exists to predict. There are great intrinsic difficulties in the way of such a result, besides others that are likely to be created by the partisans and bigots, equally on both sides. It will be interesting to note what happens in this respect during the next few years. All that can be said now is that the signs of the times, so far as they go, are promising; that Anglican Churchmen can do more to improve matters than any one else; that Church history affords many examples of parties being brought together in spite

of their mutually opposed ecclesiastical principles ; and finally, that as according to our view there must be some *one* dominant tendency in the Church of England in order for reunion, or even for a nearer approach between Church and Dissent to be possible, a *primâ facie* ground exists for expecting this latter result to follow from that tendency which is, as a matter of fact, dominant at the present time.

If, however, this expectation should NOT be realised, and Anglican Churchmanship should NOT respond to the call which by its identification of itself with English Churchmanship it has itself provoked, either some other system would have to take its place, or else all hopes of a nearer approach between Church and Dissent would have to be abandoned. Perhaps this choice of alternatives will not be admitted. It will perhaps be suggested that there is no reason why parties in the Church of England should thus coalesce until they present approximately one united front, and it will be denied that a fusion of this kind is a necessary preliminary to any essential improvement in the relations of Church and Dissent. It may be well therefore to consider for a moment what are the grounds on which this view rests, the view, viz., that the Church of England must be one, or approximately one, as regards her own constituent parts before she can become more one with the denominations of Christians outside her own borders.

Now, it was said above that this necessity followed from the requirement that there must be some responsible and representative organ in the Church of England capable of conducting negotiations and entering into relations with outsiders. And this no doubt is true. During the century which is now coming to a close there have been several attempts at a better understanding between Church and Dissent initiated by individual Churchmen and individual sections of Churchmen. But these attempts have not

only fallen through, they have for the most part had no other effect, except to bring into clearer relief the apparent hopelessness of the task which has been thus taken in hand. This impotent result does not arise wholly, perhaps not chiefly, from the intrinsic difficulties of the situation, many and various as these are, but rather from the fact that the Churchmen or sections of Churchmen who have acted as negotiators do not speak with any *authority* on behalf of the Church of England as a whole. Even if they had spoken, which in no case have they as a matter of fact done, on behalf of a majority of Churchmen, this would not have been enough. To come to terms under such circumstances would merely mean that whilst the old Dissenters were conciliated by the majority, new Dissenters would be called into existence by the revolt of the dissentient minority. Nothing appears more certainly from recent disclosures<sup>1</sup> of what has gone on in our own times as regards changes of front which Churchmen have been asked to concede, than the power of minorities to prevent such changes from taking place, or to render them inoperative. Whether this practically almost unlimited power of veto ought to belong to a minority even in such a necessarily conservative institution as the Church of England, is not a question which we are called on to decide. Our concern is not with the justice or expediency of the fact, but with the fact itself.

But this reason for the necessity above contended for lies after all more or less on the surface. A far more vital consideration in support of the same conclusion remains to be now brought forward. No really earnest and sincere *desire* for union, or even for an effective co-operation, between Churchmen and Dissenters, is likely to be manifested, except on con-

<sup>1</sup> The lately published *Life of Archbishop Tait* is fertile in such disclosures. See especially the letters received by the Archbishop as regards the damatory clauses of the Athanasian Creed.

dition of the Church of England becoming like-minded and homogeneous throughout all its parts to a much greater extent than is the case at present. For why SHOULD union or an advance towards union be desired by either side? Surely the only real reason for the existence of such a desire is the felt necessity of combination for religious purposes. Reunion would be hailed with delight by Churchmen, negatively, as the removal of what is a scandal to the Christian religion, and a hindrance to united action on the part of Christians; positively, as an immense addition to the Church's strength, not only in the shape of increased numbers, but also in the shape of increased power for good. But the Church could never enjoy any of these advantages, or could do so only very imperfectly, if the Dissenters added to her communion were either to constitute themselves a separate party in the Church, or were to join some one of the parties into which the Church is at present divided. The latter course, which is the one really, though not avowedly, and perhaps not consciously, favoured by most of the Church advocates of reunion, is felt by Churchmen generally to be unsatisfactory and unworkable; and this feeling, we may be sure, secretly disinclines not a few Churchmen to reunion, seeing that it would be purchased at too great a price. And though no doubt there are some persons to whom the mere rooting out of "schism," quite independently of any after consequences, seems an object of paramount importance, it is not probable that this object by itself would ever excite the amount of general enthusiasm which would be required for its attainment.

Let us now look at the matter from the other side, viz., from the point of view of Dissent. Dissenters, then, it is here maintained, will never be really desirous of union with the Church except on condition that the Church is herself more united, with all that this implies. For if we look deeper than those mere social considerations by which Dissenters are



sometimes attracted to the Church, we shall find the only attraction of this kind really worth account is that which is derived from the Church as a NATIONAL Church, by which is intended to be meant is by no means the Church as established by law, but far rather as the authoritative exponent of the faith. That Dissenters do not feel this motive is due to that "note of provincialism" which is only too familiar and which here, therefore, simply taken for granted. But even as it stands, there are many Dissenters, especially the higher class, who recognise the Church claims as the representative of British Christianity, though they may regard the Church in spite as false to its mission and as having no claim on themselves. It has often been said that in numberless ways the right is unconsciously conceded to the Church by even when as far as their conscious interest is concerned, they are exerting themselves to resist all their power in order to dispute the claims of the Church of England, in spite of their ordinary parochial experience, mainly by the dependence of Dissenters on the Church and by the influence which they themselves bring to bear on their Nonconformist brethren in consequence. It will no doubt be said that such clergymen have this influence mainly because the Church to which they belong is established by law. But this is a very doubtful proposition, which is far rather doubtful in question, which is far rather doubtful in sense, even in the minds of Dissenters themselves—irrespective of its being established by law, the Church of the nation.

Now does this feeling exist as a mere survival? It has, on the contrary, a perfect

*rationale* in connection with the facts of religious life in England at the present time. For there is now very generally prevalent, and that in the most unlooked-for quarters, a craving for a Church capable of supplying a clear and definite statement of religious faith to which it will adhere, and which it is prepared to explain and defend. No reasonable Dissenter would deny that it is the right, and most such would insist that it is the duty, of the Church of England to satisfy this craving. Even as it is, the Church of England holds the field to such an extent as to have really no rival in respect of such provision as is at present made to meet the required demand. Loose, fluctuating, and inconsistent as is the teaching of its official representatives; timid and vacillating as is their guidance, there is yet more light and leading derived from this source than from any other in these realms or than from all others combined.

If, then, the Church of England is to make any further progress as regards attracting to her communion the Nonconformists of England, it will doubtless be in virtue of her character as an authoritative Church, though of course not in the Roman sense. As regards this latter, it may be that in the future our Church will claim less prescriptive authority than she does now, whilst exercising more real authority than she does now. But however this may be, the Nonconformists are not likely to be drawn to the Church by the Church's abdication of her position. They would far rather see her occupy that position worthily and in a right manner.

Such being the case, how can we expect that a favourable impression will ever be produced on the minds of Nonconformists by the spectacle of a Church of England divided against herself? In order for that Church to speak with the voice of authority, the divergent views existing in her own communion must coalesce more than they do now, Church parties must become more united, there must be more of a

common spirit inspiring the organisation of Church work and Church life.<sup>1</sup> Authority presupposes that there should be a real correspondence between the union and the unity of those who exercise it. If, as is often maintained, the only ideal capable of being realised by the Church is a mere general unity of spirit without reference to any other unity or an advance towards it, then the Church of England can be neither an authoritative Church nor an object of desire to Nonconformists. Not that this ideal is in itself a bad one, even if it should turn out to be alone possible. Merely, in that case the Church would have no inducement to reunion to offer to Nonconformists which would be sufficiently tempting, since to join a Church in which wide sectional differences of opinion were admitted and tolerated, would not confer on them any substantial advantages as compared with those which they enjoy now *apart* from the Church. For, as matters *now* stand, parties in the Church acknowledge that there is or ought to be a unity of spirit existing between them, and there is or ought to be under present conditions this same relationship between Churchmen and Dissenters. Now, if the Dissenters either added themselves to some one of the parties in the Church, or became a new Church party, they would still be no more, though they would be no less, united with those who differ from them than they are now, and the only thing they would gain would be the merely formal privilege of calling themselves members of the Church of England, or—to speak in the language of Churchmen—members of the Church of Christ in England. This latter privilege appears no doubt to Anglican Churchmen as of inestimable value. But even if this privilege were valued to an equal extent by Dissenters, it would

<sup>1</sup> This is intended to refer to the Church of England throughout its whole extent. As regards the dominant School of Churchmen and the masses of their followers, there is "common spirit" enough.

lose this value in their eyes if its possession was not seen by them to involve a real and effective union on the part of Churchmen amongst themselves, and by analogy therefore on the part of Dissenters if they became Churchmen.

Further arguments in support of this conclusion are unnecessary. Briefly stated, what has been said is intended to establish three positions, (1) that the Church must become one herself before she can become one with others; (2) that it is only on this condition that she can impress Dissenters with a sense of her authority; (3) that such an impression is the only thing calculated, or at any rate the thing best calculated, to attract Dissenters to Church membership.

With regard to the outlook in the future, the Church of England will probably be dominated in turn by several different tendencies before reunion or even a closer union will become possible. Each of these, as they succeed each other, will be more dominant and over-mastering than the last, until at length the supremacy of some one will be converted into at least relative universality. The interest of the tendency now in the ascendant consists in the fact that it has exercised a wider and a deeper influence than any other by which the Church of England has been affected since the Reformation; it has diffused itself more, has identified itself more with the Church of England as a WHOLE; it has claimed to be more than a section or party in the Church; and by the men of the present generation, whatever may be the case as regards the future, this claim has to a great extent been recognised. Hence, the Oxford Movement, especially in its latter-day development, has an importance for the student of contemporary ecclesiastical history which is altogether independent of its intrinsic merits or defects. It is at once a prophecy and a fulfilment of the Church's internal union, and this—as is here maintained—must necessarily precede the Church's union with outsiders.

In what has been said above on the relationship of Church and Dissent the argument has proceeded on the assumption that reunion is a possible and probable consummation, and it may even seem to have been inferred that this result is destined to take place. But whilst there is much in the signs of the times which seems to point in this direction, it must also be frankly admitted that there are many tendencies which suggest an altogether opposite conclusion. The ordinary dispassionate observer would probably be more inclined to pronounce against the likelihood of ultimate reunion than for it, judging from present indications. To such an one, we may suppose, it would appear that there was much more reason to look forward in the future to the indefinite multiplication of Churches and sects co-existing, but mutually independent and autonomously governed in each case. This would mean, otherwise stated, that the form of Church government destined ultimately to become universal, is congregationalism carried to its most extreme lengths. As this view is a very plausible one and admits of being recommended on many different grounds, it will be necessary, before proceeding further, to examine into its nature and to attempt an estimate of its significance.

The growth of congregationalism is not to be measured by its prevalence amongst those Nonconformists—such as the Congregationalists and Baptists—who are governed ecclesiastically on Congregationalist principles. As an accepted system of Church government, congregationalism is still confined to those denominations by which it has been from the first professed. In a more general sense, however, not only has it extended itself amongst non-congregationalist Dissenters, but it has also exercised great influence on the Church of England. At the present time, the centre of religious life and activity in the Church of England is coming to be (more especially in large towns) far rather the congregation than the parish.

This of course does not mean that religious men and women now confine themselves to participation in acts of congregational worship, or that as much missionary and philanthropic work is not now done in our parishes as was formerly done in them. What it means is, that at the present time the parochial organisation is not, as such, the sole or even the chief directing influence. Even in cases where it seems to be so, it is the *parish church rather than the parish* that discharges this function, or there has been some private agency at work in the parish, which, whether acting under parochial authority or otherwise, is virtually a self-constituted and independent organisation. The Church of England, in fact, so far resembles the Dissenting communities, that its most characteristic energies proceed from the several congregations which are assembled in its name, rather than through the recognised parochial channels.

Nor is it merely that congregations are thus active *individually*, though the activity which the Church has shown of late years in that way is a most noteworthy phenomenon. What is now meant by Church work in its more universal and comprehensive sense is, when it comes to be examined, not a manipulation of the parochial machinery for common ends, but a combination of certain sections of Churchmen representing congregations like-minded with each other, to promote objects approved of by those congregations. That such congregations do not always, nay, perhaps do not often, represent the respective parishes from which they emanate, so far as regards the corporate capacity of these latter, is a truth as manifest in fact as it is far-reaching in importance. The parochial organisation was adequate and effective so long as religious differences were in compulsory abeyance. When, however, differences and divergences arose, the congregation, though NOT recognised, became a more necessary form of organisation than the parish which WAS recognised. The union of congregations

in various groups became equally necessary, and the activity of the Church thus came to mean, either the activity of some one congregation, or else of various congregations associated together by a common bond of sympathy.

It may seem that all this is an abstract way of talking and that there is nothing in fact corresponding with it. And it is no doubt true that the congregations in our churches do not consciously assume, and in most cases do not realise, the position of independence here assigned to them. At the present time, English Church people are drifting some one way and some another in obedience to the most diverse currents of religious thought and opinion, and it would be impossible to localise the several tendencies at work or to say that this or that congregation was an embodiment of one or other of them. None the less, however, the movement of contemporary Church life is in the direction we have indicated. In other words, any attempt to discover the forces which govern the development of the Church of England at the present time would necessarily start from a careful inspection, not of parishes, as such, but of the congregations into which Churchmen are divided according to their respective tastes.

Considering, then, these and other like facts both as regards the Church of England and as regards those Dissenting denominations whose behaviour in this respect the Church tends to reproduce, it cannot but appear as highly probable that this same state of things will increase and extend itself, and in a more developed form will become ultimately the basis of the settlement of the whole question.

This conclusion derives additional support from the consideration that in the United States, where the forces of modern civilisation are generally regarded as having fuller and freer scope than is allowed to them in England, not only is the religious equality of all denominations guaranteed by

law, but the tendency is much more towards their development separately and independently than it is towards their unification. It may, therefore, with much show of reason be argued that a phenomenon which exhibits itself in the absence of old-world precedents and traditions would, if these latter impediments were removed, exhibit itself also in England.

Few of us perhaps realise how strong this tendency is, especially in matters of religion, at the present time. We are all aware, no doubt, of the great attractiveness and the great present popularity of the principle. "You think as you like and let us think as we like;" but some of us are not so well aware that this principle is now by many, and by an increasing number, held not merely as a protest against the exercise of either direct or indirect compulsion, but also as expressing a mode of relationship between persons and parties which it is not desired to change or to improve upon. The members of different religious denominations have had the duty of mutual toleration so deeply impressed upon them, that in many quarters the result is not merely their non-interference with each other, but also the habit of regarding the existence of such denominational differences as belonging to the very nature of religion, as presenting no stumbling-block, as a thing which a man can very well live with, and perhaps even as a thing which a man could not live without. Nor is it only the lukewarm and the indifferent who are thus minded; it is not uncommon to find even men of earnest religious convictions similarly disposed. It is not liberalism which has produced this disposition, for those by whom it is entertained are not moved with sympathy, nor do they make advances, towards the members of other denominations. It is, rather, partly that modern life is so vast and its conditions so complex that the separatism of class-association is a practical necessity; partly, that there is a growing



tendency to identify denominational and even congregational differences with social distinctions between classes. As regards this latter influence, it is quite certain that an increase of sectional differentiation in matters of religion never takes place without reference to class distinctions, and if, therefore, the dominant tendency in the future is to be unlimited sectarianism, this will inevitably act as a bulwark for the erection of barriers between the classes of society which in their turn will strengthen and perpetuate the religious differences. This incidental result, however, though to many it will seem of more importance than the main fact from which it proceeds, cannot in the present connection be further investigated.

Nor do the limits of this discussion admit of any attempt being made to estimate at length the ethical character of these sectarian proclivities. It has already been observed that not only indifferentists, but also many earnest-minded men, are now inclined to be content with the denominational *status quo*. But the greater part of the support which this point of view receives is derived either from those who are morbidly fearful of new and undesirable complications arising in the event of change, or else from those who are deeply rooted in scepticism, and disbelieving in all religious professions hold that the existing arrangement is as good as any other ; or else from those who have not enough imagination to be able even to conceive of anything different ; or finally from those—the largest class of all—who on every ground desire nothing better than to be let alone and to let others alone. On the other hand, the better and worthier representatives of this same class are composed of those whose religious devotion is so associated with particularism of doctrine and ritual that comprehension appears to them in the light of contamination, or else of those whose strong practical sense inclines them to make the most of what they have without thinking of what they have not ; or else of those whose

æsthetic sense of harmony and love of traditional observance predispose them to conservatism on "historical" grounds.

To return, however, to the question of probabilities as between the tendency towards reunion and that towards separatism. Anything like a confident prediction with regard to an issue of such vast magnitude, and which depends on such unforeseen contingencies, would be altogether beside the mark. If we look at what seems most probable, judging from the steady even flow of contemporary history, the conclusion must be that the voice of civilised mankind is more likely to decide in favour of increased denominational and congregational independence, and it will then be reasonable to look forward in the future to an intensified if not to a multiplied sectarianism. But it must be remembered, on the other hand, that this latter expectation presupposes the march of events and the development of tendencies precisely according to the ordinary laws of civilisation as we see them at present in operation, whereas the occurrence of cataclysms and revolutions at certain intervals of time is, in religious history, not the exception but the rule. To generalise from "the movement of contemporary civilisation" does not in matters of the kind we are now discussing take us very far. In point of fact, many deeper questions are involved in the issue here presented, *e.g.* the question as to the future of religious belief, and that as to the nature and place of authority in matters of religion. It is not indeed contended that in the course of the working out of these and other like questions reunion will be arrived at or even helped forward. Any such result will to many appear as in the last degree unlikely, however probable it may appear to ourselves. But though this is not contended, it is allowable to protest against the settlement of the question in an opposite sense merely on the strength of superficial generalisations as to the progress of society. Religious

movements, however closely related to other contemporary movements, are unfathomable in their origin and incalculable in their results. Nothing absolute therefore can be laid down, either on the one side or the other, as regards this subject.

But if the course of things in general is urged on behalf of religious separatism, it is open for us to take advantage of a different kind of evidence in support of the opposite conclusion. For we may surely believe that that side which enlists the advocacy of the best men and which appeals to the noblest instincts of our nature, must be destined in the long run to triumph, though its "warfare" may be not yet "accomplished." There has never been a time since the Dissenting bodies first became conspicuous enough to attract attention, when their separation from the Church has not been looked on with concern both by ecclesiastical and political statesmen, and when the idea of reunion with them has not been hailed with delight by the more catholic-minded portion of the community. To suppose that what has been so ardently desired by so many generations of the most personally devout, and at the same time the most public-spirited Englishmen, is foredoomed to inevitable failure, strikes at the root of the old-fashioned, but still not yet altogether discredited, belief that goodness, especially if it is allied with reasonableness, must at last be crowned by success.

Nor because the attempted solution of this question has produced many chimerical proposals, ought we to despair of the possibility, if not of reunion, at all events of some better arrangement between Church and Dissent than that which exists at present. A subject of this kind necessarily gives rise to far-reaching aspirations, many of which are incapable of attainment. Moreover, though the relations between Churchmen and Dissenters have improved, the two sides still know very little of each other, and therefore it is not unnatural that there should be a very limited

understanding of the questions at issue by those who approach them only or chiefly from their own side. But we may suppose that in the future not only will there be a better mutual understanding between Churchmen and Dissenters, but also that the controversy between them will lose much of its old significance owing to the interest of both parties being diverted to an altogether different class of questions. Whatever may be the final result of this diversion of interest as regards the questions involved, the result as regards Church and Dissent will undoubtedly be to bring them more closely together. As, however, enough has been said on this aspect of the relationship between Church and Dissent, the space which remains will be devoted to the consideration of a state of things in which there is no outside influence at work of the kind referred to above. For the question of Church and Dissent in country parishes, and even in country town parishes, is scarcely, if at all, complicated by the presence of any negative or critical influences of modern thought. It will be better, however, to reserve what we have to say as regards this question for a separate chapter.

## CHAPTER IV

### RURAL DISSENT

THROUGHOUT the above discussion the reference has been chiefly, though not exclusively, to Dissent in comparatively educated centres and amongst urban populations. Very little has been said about a fact which is perhaps even more familiar, viz. the strength of the Dissenting interest in rural districts.

The causes commonly assigned for this increase of strength are the following.

In the first place, the Church in rural England is associated in the minds of the agricultural classes with all those aristocratic claims to superiority against which just now there is so much bitter agitation. Secondly, the educated Church laity in country districts is rapidly declining in numbers and influence. Hence the clergyman, who often, even in spite of the best intentions, is out of sympathy with his flock (not reckoning the cases where this is his own fault), is placed in a position which makes success, and even the avoidance of failure, in many cases impossible. Striving single-handed against countless odds, he either gives up the task in despair, or else breaks down under its weight. Thirdly, it is seldom that there is much warmth or heartiness of worship in the public services of the Church in these country districts, where the churches are large and the congregations are small ; this places the church at a

disadvantage as compared with the chapel, which, however inferior in other respects, has at least the merit of promoting congregational unity and devotional heartiness. Lastly, owing to the emigration from the country into the towns, which is increasing every year, the best and most vigorous part of the rural population of England is no longer available for parochial, or indeed for any other purposes, on its own native ground, those of whom it is composed being removed to a distance at an early age. Now, this tells much more against the Church than against Dissent, the latter not being called on to occupy itself with any works of parochial organisation, or to do more than maintain in existence its own form of worship.

In considering how far these causes are sufficient to account for the phenomenon in question, we cannot, of course, ignore the fact that in the *country* districts of England, the social and political element which enters into Dissent is much stronger than it used to be ; indeed this political element is of comparatively recent growth, or, at all events, has recently enlarged itself. As distinguished from this, the religious element in rural Dissent has long been what it is now, the most favourite Dissenting denominations in country districts having always been those which are the most narrow and uncompromising in their dogmatism, *e.g.* the Primitive Methodists, the Calvinistic Methodists, and the Particular Baptists.

What, then, is the relation of the religious to the political factor in rural Dissent ?

Now, though we admit that in some parts of the country there are Nonconformists whose chief interest in religion is political, whose attraction to Dissent is indeed, properly speaking, not religious at all, but rather social and agrarian (this being one amongst many signs of the discontent prevailing amongst the agricultural classes and of the declining strength of aristocratic feudalism), though we admit that there is

a certain amount of Dissent in the country districts of England which has its root in these motives, it does not seem to us to be the case that this is so generally. To our thinking, rural Dissent which is in earnest, usually originates more or less in religious motives, even when it assumes a political form. The break up of the aristocratic system represented by the parson and the squire, no doubt partly gives rise to, just as partly it is caused by, the spread of Dissent. But, nevertheless, Dissent in most country districts where its influence is strongly felt, arises not nearly so much from these tendencies as from a felt religious want and a desire to satisfy that want. And this is much more than most Churchmen would care to confess at the bottom of the country Dissenter's animus against the Church ; or rather, perhaps it would be truer to say, that feeling generally out of sympathy with the ruling powers in his own neighbourhood, this feeling becomes intensified as regards the Church by his sense of the Church's impotence as a spiritual force. Sometimes, however, the sense of the Church's failure (which, as has been shown, is not wholly the Church's fault, many causes having united to produce it, over which the Church has no control) is more disinterestedly religious. There are those, and they are an increasing number, who dissent from the Church because they really and truly cannot find in her communion the spiritual nourishment they demand.

The main feeling then of this class of Dissenters is a religious one, though no doubt in most cases other motives mix with this one. This mixture often produces an unqualified antagonism such as, especially in small country villages, presents a truly mournful picture of the Church's broken unity and divided life. We do not wish to pursue this subject. It is sufficient to have stated our belief that political motives, though they enter largely into the feelings of these rural Dissenters, are yet in most cases subordinate to an even stronger religious motive, which latter both

produces Dissent and excites the fiercest opposition of Dissenters against the Church.

Nor on other grounds is it necessary to enter at greater length into the facts above referred to. For in considering the remedies which are called for by this state of things, it would be well to remember that these latter are to be looked for not so much in any direct alteration in the relations of Church and Dissent in country parishes, as rather in the improvement of the Church's own internal organisation without reference to the existence of Dissent and the animosity of Dissenters. An improvement of this kind might not eliminate, or even materially weaken, Dissent, but it would add so much to the strength of the Church as to make it then a matter of indifference to Churchmen what was the strength of the position occupied by the Dissenters. There will, in fact, for a long time to come, be plenty of room in rural England for the coexistence of both parties. The present situation is to be deprecated because, owing to the archaisms in her constitution and the unsuitableness of her machinery to meet the demands made upon it, the Church of England is prevented from fulfilling her mission as regards villagers and country-folk. These impediments are not at all compensated for, as is often wrongly supposed, by the advantages which the Church possesses owing to her traditional position and the influence arising from it. The dignity and prestige thence derived do not at the present day count for much, whereas the weakness of the Church in respect of such matters as the distribution of her clergy and of their endowments, the adjustment of parochial boundaries, the difficulty of securing the right man for the right place, and of moving clergymen on to positions in which they can be more useful or less cumbersome, counts for a great deal. The solution of these questions would affect the church and chapel difficulty in country places in the only way in which it is desirable that that difficulty should



be affected by any remedial measures, viz. by enabling the Church to do justice to herself, and by securing a fair field for her pastoral ministrations and parochial activities. If, after being thus liberated from the antiquated trammels imposed on her by the *damnosa hereditas* of her privileged position, the Church were to fail to make any such impression on rural populations as she has made on urban ones, it would then be very unreasonable to find fault with the Dissenters for taking the Church's place, and for succeeding in a work in which the Church had failed. Indeed, even as matters now stand, it must be thankfully admitted that, in many a village and on many a country side, the Dissenters do supply a real religious want which would not be supplied otherwise.

It cannot, however, but be felt that in spite of the strength of the Dissenting interest being at the present time relatively greater in the villages than it is in the towns, this arises very largely from artificial, and therefore in all probability from temporary, causes. For Dissent in the towns is due, at all events comparatively, to a conscious preference of opinion, to theological and ecclesiastical proclivities which spring from contemporary movements of thought on religious subjects. But rural Dissent, so far from being produced by tendencies of widespread prevalence, is a strictly local phenomenon. It has no independent existence, but is dependent simply on the failure of the Church in a particular neighbourhood to make itself felt as a spiritual agency. It is also associated with the present condition of agriculture in England, and with the social and agrarian crisis through which the agricultural districts of England are now passing. But these characteristics of English country life are essentially transitory and vary indefinitely even now in different localities. Let no one therefore think that the Church is necessarily doomed to the forfeiture of her influence in these country districts. So far as regards the conditions under which she is at present

working, there might easily be a turn of the tide in her favour, and if this were to take place, and at the same time the Church were to reform herself in those respects above mentioned, and were to initiate certain other changes not less warmly advocated by contemporary Church reformers, there is no reason to doubt that she would regain the hold which she has temporarily lost on the affections of the agricultural classes of the community.

But here of course we are met by what is after all the main, if not the only, difficulty in the present situation. Is it likely that the Church will reform herself? or that Parliament will undertake this work? or that if Parliament did do so, the Church would accept the legislation of Parliament? At the present time, all these three suppositions seem in the highest degree unrealisable, though in order for any substantial improvement to be effected, they would all three have to be realised.

As regards the Church's reformation of herself without the assistance of Parliament, the limits within which such a thing is possible are soon reached. But even within these limits, it seems almost hopeless to expect that Churchmen will be unanimous enough amongst themselves to do what requires to be done. And this is especially the case as regards what requires to be done in *country* districts. In town parishes, the pressure of public opinion on the clergy is much stronger, not only because in material ways the clergy are there dependent on their congregations to an extent unknown in the country, but also because the mere expression of a collective opinion on the part of large numbers of persons, many of them highly educated and influential, acts as a stimulus which in the country is wholly wanting. Consequently, many minor but still extremely salutary reforms have been carried through in town parishes by the spontaneous consent of clergy and laity. But this phenomenon, which even in towns is by no means as

common as it might be, can hardly be said to have any existence in the country, where clerical autocracy is so much stronger and the educated Church laity so much weaker. Our conclusion therefore is, that the Church is not likely to enter to any great extent on the work of self-reformation, and that she is especially unlikely to enter on this work as regards what requires to be done to increase her efficiency in country parishes.

As for Parliament interesting itself in Church matters, every year that passes seems to increase the disinclination of the House of Commons to any such undertakings ; indeed, the doctrine is becoming more and more fashionable that Parliament is by its very nature disqualified from legislating, if not on ecclesiastical affairs in general, at all events on the affairs of the Church of England.

Finally, everything goes to show that Churchmen are indisposed to accept Parliamentary legislation except on their own terms, which latter are not likely to be accepted by Parliament. Even quite small measures, such as the Tithe Act of 1891 and the Clergy Discipline Act of 1892, though initiated by the Government of the day with a view to the removal of obvious evils affecting the Church, are by many Churchmen only very grudgingly accepted, whilst by none perhaps are they very enthusiastically supported.

These considerations have nothing to do with the subject of the present discussion except in so far as that the difficulty of getting anything done to improve the Church is one of the facts which have to be reckoned with in regard to the relations of Church and Dissent, more especially in country districts. How cumbrous is the present machinery of the Church, and how ill-suited for the work required of it, whether amongst primitive people in out-of-the-way places, or amongst the more educated but not always more prosperous tenant farmers and peasantry of the home counties, can only be known to those who live

*in* the country without being entirely *of* it, and who are neither cockneys on the one hand nor mere country bumpkins on the other. The literature of the last few years has been fruitful in studies of rural life, produced by writers thus duly qualified both as regards knowledge of facts and power of generalisation. But such writers, though making often the most valuable suggestions, seldom appear to see that the real difficulty is not what to do, but how to get anything done. Thus, in the chapter entitled "The Church and the Villages" of his *Trials of a Country Parson*, the witty and ingenious Dr. Jessopp writes admirably on the subject of Church reform as regards rural districts. The proposals, however, are stated without anything being ever once said to show, what nevertheless their author is far too acute an observer not to know without needing to be told, viz. that there is no one of such proposals which would not divide even a small clerical assembly, much less the Church at large, into hostile and irreconcilable factions ; no one of such proposals again which, even if it passed muster with the Church of England clergy and laity, would not hopelessly divide not merely the House of Commons but each separate group of which the House of Commons is composed. The way to Church reform is in fact blocked to such an extent as to be almost, if not quite, impassable, and reformers, therefore, whilst profoundly dissatisfied with the present state of things, are compelled to make the best they can of it, whilst at the same time watching for an opportunity to exchange it for a better one.

As regards the question of Church and Dissent in rural districts, this attempt to make the best of things as they are, may take either of two forms, the first of which is exclusive of the second, though the second may and should exhibit some features at any rate of the first. As to which is to be preferred, the circumstances of different localities require to be considered in different cases. The two policies referred to are—

1. For the Church to be content to keep a good

deal to herself without aggressiveness and without proselytism, to aim at thoroughness and efficiency within the limits marked out for her, presenting to the surrounding country the spectacle of a heartily united and devotionally inclined body of worshippers, living earnest and consistent lives themselves, and not desirous of increasing the Church's following except on condition of those who accept Church membership showing themselves worthy of it. This policy may be pursued by persons who profess the most different views on Church matters and by members of the most different Church parties. It has, in fact, no reference to any questions either of Church doctrine or of Church ritual. It consists mainly in the maintenance by Churchmen of a high standard of qualitative fitness amongst themselves, in the adherence to this standard without thought of any calculations of the numerical strength of the Church interest, and in the endeavour to win over outsiders, and amongst them Dissenters, by the pure force of example rather than by any more aggressive efforts. That such a policy may tend to exclusiveness when it is ignorantly or incautiously administered, cannot be denied; but there is nothing intrinsically exclusive in its motive, nor is it at all necessarily of this character in its effects. There is not the slightest doubt that this policy is often in the best sense a success, and that it is especially successful in regard to the influence which it exercises on the rural Dissenter. The better class of such Dissenters are not in the least impressed by troops of communicants and confirmation candidates in their own parish churches, any more than they are by the published returns of the *Church of England Year-Book* as regards the strength of the Establishment as a whole. What they look for is reality of conviction and seriousness of life, and where these latter are wanting, no parade of the Church's available resources—whether of men or money—will be accepted by them as an equivalent.

Such, then, is *one* practicable policy which it is open

for the Church to pursue in reference to the Dissenters, or, as we ought rather to say, such is one policy which, if it is pursued by Churchmen for its own sake, will have the effect of increasing the Church's strength in the eyes of Dissenters.

2. The only alternative policy to this is to *recognise* Dissent, or at all events to recognise it in the case of those who by reason of their backwardness and want of education are unable to be reached by the Church. Let it be remembered that we are speaking of the agricultural classes and of the most ignorant section of those classes. Now, not only is this unenlightened residuum of the peasantry the chief source from which rural Dissent draws its support, but dissenting agencies are much more within their right, as well as infinitely more successful, in dealing with this residuum than they are in dealing with any other portion of the agricultural community. For in cases where the shop-keeping class of villages or small country towns are Dissenters, and still more where yeomen or farmers are Dissenters, a Churchman may be pardoned for thinking that better things might have been expected of them. But in cases where the peasantry pure and simple are concerned, more especially in exclusively agricultural districts, it is difficult to resist the weight of the enormous amount of evidence which goes to show that "they do these things better" in the chapel than in the Church. It must be borne in mind, that we are not arguing as to what might or might not be the case in the event of certain reforms taking place in the Church's constitution and methods of working. We are arguing on the supposition of the *status quo* existing as at present. If Church reform is excluded, what possible means of reaching those whom the Church now fails to reach remains open, except that of leaving the matter to be dealt with, up to a certain point, by the Dissenters?

Against any such proposal no doubt numerous

objections will be raised, only a few of which have we space to consider here. It will be said by some that, even as matters now stand, the Church does *not* fail to reach the classes in question, and we shall at once be met by the opponent so familiar to us in the columns of Church newspapers, whose own parish is a standing example of the possibilities open to clergymen, of bringing the Church more into touch with the agricultural classes. But suppose we admit in deference to this gentleman, and others like him, that the Church is *not always* a failure as regards the peasantry, and that in certain parishes the Chapel as compared with the Church is simply nowhere in the eyes of the agricultural labourer, will any one say that this is a COMMON case, or that where it exists it is not produced by causes which are as exceptional as is the phenomenon itself? But if such is the case, what is to be done?

Well, a second class of objectors to our programme would say: "Build mission churches; hold mission services; enrol the villagers in guilds and establish branch societies in the villages; set on foot village libraries, reading-rooms, lectures, Bible-classes, weekly meetings, &c. These are improvements which can be effected without any constitutional changes either in Church or State, and without any disturbance, therefore, of existing arrangements."

That these fruits of the Church's new-born activity are extremely effective and highly beneficial, is unquestionable, and it ought to be about the last thing to enter into the head of any well-wisher of the Church to undervalue or depreciate the services thus rendered to her cause. But we are speaking now of places thinly populated, especially so as regards the number of available Church workers, such as are required for the administration of undertakings like those above mentioned. We are speaking of villages dotted over the country, hamlets scattered along the hill-side. As regards places of this kind, no doubt

the machinery provided by the opportunities referred to is excellent. But this machinery, in default of persons to work it, moves but very slowly, even if it does not come altogether to a standstill. In many and in an increasing number of rural parishes, the clergyman and his family are the only persons who can be made use of for these purposes. If by a fortunate circumstance there should be other residents on the spot, both able and willing to assist the clergyman in these matters of parochial organisation, the number of helpers capable of being thus secured is still relatively a very small one, smaller still when it is remembered that many of those who offer themselves are not drawn to the work by any real enthusiasm, or qualified for it by any special fitness. Yet it requires both enthusiasm and special qualifications to make the dry bones of a new-fangled officialism—for to the rural mind this is how much of what is now being done appears—assume the character of a living organisation, the parts of which are helped severally by their mutual subsistence. The absence then of a sufficient supply, both in quantity and quality, of persons devoting themselves to social efforts and parochial organisation in country districts is, at all events as matters now stand, an almost fatal drawback to the successful prosecution of the undertakings in question.

But if we are so struck by the inadequacy of the Church's methods, both ordinary and supplemental, to reinvigorate the starved spiritual life of the English peasantry, what have we to propose instead? What is the plan which we have dignified by the name of a policy and spoken of as the only possible alternative to the other policy—as we have called it—above mentioned? Surely, it will be said, you are not going to argue that because the Church is weak in these country districts, she should therefore abandon her own accustomed methods, whether old or new, and join hands with the Dissenters? To this query let it



be at once replied that we do not think that any such plan is either desirable or practicable. What is meant by this alternative policy is rather to be conceived as follows. Those workers and helpers, the paucity of whose numbers is the chief cause of the Church's weakness in villages and hamlets, are often to be found existing in considerable force amongst the Dissenters. A chapel anniversary or tea-meeting does not usually fall through for want of a sufficient amount of local talent to complete the necessary preparations. And as men are usually forthcoming for these and other similar undertakings, so likewise is money. To take only missionary meetings, the sums contributed on these occasions by quite poor village Dissenters are often remarkable. Very creditable too is the energy which provides in connection with each village chapel a supply of Sunday-school teachers, however inferior these latter may be in quality. Nor must we forget the help which has been rendered to the Temperance cause by Nonconformist village associations.

Now, surely it might be possible for the Church to recognise, in a more distinct sense than she recognises at present, the work which is thus being done, as well as those by whom it is done. That Churchmen may take part with Dissenters in works admittedly beneficial from a moral or social point of view, is a statement frequently made by those who speak or write on the subject of Church and Dissent. And in our cities and towns something, though not much, has been done to realise this programme. At all events, Anglican clergymen and Nonconformist ministers are to be found, both in London and other large towns, speaking on the same platform at public meetings. But there has been very little of this kind of thing hitherto in the country. And no doubt it is difficult to initiate such a policy in a country parish without being misunderstood. Churchmen are not unnaturally afraid that they may seem to be

compromising their Churchmanship in the eyes of ignorant people, who are unable to distinguish between points of agreement and points of difference. The mere fact that a considerable time has passed without any such attempts at common action having been set on foot, is, in the country, where precedent and tradition count for so much, a strong argument against them. No doubt, therefore, in many cases it would require no ordinary power of dealing with men to carry through any changes of this kind to a successful issue. It can, however, as little be doubted that the thing *wants* doing, and likewise that there are no insuperable difficulties in the way of its accomplishment.

But probably there would be no objection taken by Churchmen to such a policy (*i.e.* except as regards the *practical* difficulty of realising it) provided that the basis of common action was confined strictly to matters of moral and social concern, and did not affect any question of principle as between Church and Dissent. Now everything depends on the sense in which this limitation is understood ; for it may be understood in such a sense as practically to nullify the whole policy here referred to, or it may be understood in such a sense as to admit of that policy being carried out without any impediment. Of course every clergyman recognises that he ought, and, indeed, that he is bound, to minister to Dissenters in so far as they are his parishioners, but the point is whether he can recognise Dissent and Dissenters *as such*, and if so, how far ?

Let us understand the recognition of Dissent as meaning, in the first place, the clear discrimination between those who are, and those who are not, Dissenters. As is well known, the line between the two is, especially in country parishes, very ill-defined. Now at first sight it may seem undesirable to endeavour to make this separation in cases where people are unwilling to make it for themselves. It may be thought more liberal, as well as, from the

Church's point of view, more politic, to allow a man who has not yet declared himself a Dissenter to remain in a state of nebulousness as to which side he prefers, and to attend Church and Chapel indifferently. And if the state of mind characteristic of such persons was *really* one of uncertainty, there would no doubt be much to be said for leaving them alone. But there are two very good reasons why a Churchman who has any influence over these supposed waverers, should exert that influence in an opposite direction. The first reason is that, as experience shows, neutrals are nearly always virtually Dissenters already. They are merely restrained from calling themselves Dissenters by some family association, or by some motive of self-interest, or by a desire to stand well with both parties. Such being the case, and the fact being one which would be corroborated by almost any country clergyman who has been brought much in contact with Dissenters, it is surely better that the doubtful quantity should become a fixed and unvarying one, and that Dissenters in disguise should declare themselves in their true character.

But another reason for endeavouring to clear up this uncertainty is, that Churchmen and Dissenters are much better able to meet each other, and to understand each other, when all risk is put out of the way of their contending together for the possession of a neutral section holding the balance between them. Not only is the existence of a doubtful quantity in many cases the cause of opposition between Church and Chapel, but even where there is nothing of this kind prevailing, it prevents the two parties from becoming better friends. Of course there will always be frequent transferences from the one side to the other, and in the presence of these latter it would be too much to expect that there should be *no* friction. It is of the essence of the relationship of Church and Dissent that perfect friendship between them is not to be looked for: the most we can expect is a concordat

or *modus vivendi*. It may, however, safely be laid down that far *less* strain is likely to be put upon the relationship by avowed attachments, whether to the one side or to the other, than by concealed preferences disguising themselves under the form of an impartial neutrality.

Having thus stated what we mean by recognition in this sense, let us next proceed to consider how, according to the policy we are describing, the Church may recognise Dissent in country districts so far as to take advantage of its existence. May not combination be possible between rural Churchmen and Dissenters in some cases, and even affiliation in others? *e.g.*, *combination*, in so far as that the Church might propose to the Chapel, or *vice versa*, certain things to be done by them both in common; certain evils in the parish which require to be guarded against and remedied; certain desirable objects which require to be promoted? Devotional services held in common by Churchmen and Dissenters are more difficult, because in such matters the question as to the *form* of prayer and the nature of the services, gives rise to almost inevitable differences. But it might be possible to do what Mr. James suggested in his paper at the Rhyl Church Conference referred to above, viz., to hold once, or, if it could be managed, more often in the year, services *avowedly* designed for the common participation of Churchmen and Dissenters, and intended to bring home to them their unity not only as Christians, but also as members of the same parish.

And then as regards *affiliation*. This, no doubt, is a most delicate and thorny matter to discuss. Still to any unprejudiced mind it is hard to say whether it must seem more ridiculous or more melancholy, that there should be, as there so often are, in the same village, Church and Nonconformist Sunday Schools existing side by side, and composed of children who receive precisely the same religious instruction in the Day School. It may be said, this is all the fault of

the Dissenters. Perhaps so ; but *even* so, could not something in the way of affiliation be attempted ; there being *one* Sunday School for the whole parish, divided into departments, so as to receive the children of Church and Dissenting parents respectively, and to instruct them accordingly ? The same question arises in a different form with regard to Missionary meetings. Could not some arrangement be arrived at which should unite the Churchmen and Nonconformists of the parish in support of Missions, both home and foreign, without doing violence to their consciences ? There is no space here to indicate the form which such a scheme might take, and if there were, the scheme no doubt would be open to many objections. Yet it is impossible to believe that something might not be done, if there was a sufficient desire to do it.

It may be urged that there is *no* such desire, either on the part of Churchmen, or on that of Dissenters. As regards the former, there is the evidence of disinclination which is afforded by the "Church of England" prefix to the title of every new society and association formed of late years for the benefit of the working classes which has had the support of Churchmen. Nor as regards any of the other points mentioned above, have Churchmen inclined towards fraternisation with Nonconformists, whilst these latter, as it is only fair to add, have stiffened themselves, more especially in country places, in a similar direction. It must be remembered, however, in justice both to Church and Dissent, that most of their respective organisations originated without reference to the state of things at present existing in rural districts, and were in fact part of the religious revival, common to both of them, in the towns. We cannot tell what changes may result, therefore, from the greater preoccupation of the best men of all parties with the neglected interests of country life in England at the present time. It is difficult to imagine that the outcome of this increased attention to the wants of the villages, will be to maintain in existence a

number of separate and independent organisations, each doing badly a work which, if they were all consolidated, might be done well.

Two general remarks may be offered in conclusion. The first is that the possibilities of recognition in this *second* sense must depend on the extent to which it is possible to recognise Dissent in the *first* sense. Stated in less technical language, this means, that where the Dissenters of a country parish have no definite and organised existence *as* Dissenters, and cannot therefore, or can only with great difficulty, be even recognised as Dissenters, or approached in that sense, it is impossible to treat seriously the idea of recognising them in the sense of treating with them and making advances towards them. An understanding between two parties presupposes that each of them has arrived at that state which metaphysicians call "thinghood." But in many cases, rural Dissent is *no* thing ; it rests on no vestige of principle consciously preferred by those who profess it ; it has no assured permanence, but might vanish any day before a new clergyman, or in the event of two or three leading village tradesmen being removed from the district. Now we have recommended above, in cases of uncertainty, the clear discrimination of those who are from those who are *not* Dissenters. But probably in cases where Dissent is only just beginning to invade a parish, it is better to let it severely alone. Hence, there are *three* stages in the progress of rural Dissent which, if the country parson is sagacious enough to adjust himself to them, he will treat differently. There is, first, the stage at which Dissent is inchoate and invertebrate. In that case, it requires no notice. There is, next the stage at which it has obtained a respectable foothold. It should then be the aim of Churchmen, and indeed of Dissenters likewise, to endeavour to discriminate clearly between the members of the two connections. Lastly, there is the stage at which Dissent has become firmly rooted and permanently established. When that stage has been

reached, it must inevitably occur to every Churchman, and likewise, we should say, to every Dissenter possessed even of the most rudimentary capacity for statesmanship—that the time has come for setting on foot some of those attempts at understanding, arrangement and mutual co-operation which have been above suggested.

Our second concluding remark is that nothing<sup>1</sup> in this last direction ought to be initiated by individual clergymen merely on their own responsibility. If anything is done to place Church and Dissent in country parishes on a better footing, it should be the act, if not of the Church of England as a whole, at all events of some considerable section of that Church, whether a Diocese, an Archdeaconry, or a Rural Deanery. The uncertain duration of any one man's tenure of his incumbency would alone be a sufficient argument to support this conclusion. Nothing can be less desirable than for a clergyman to dabble in negotiations the results of which, whether salutary or the reverse, may not be accepted by his successor. Nor is there any worse dislocation in the history of a parish than that which arises, when what has been done by one clergyman is undone by another. But even independently of this consideration, no changes of the kind referred to are ever likely to be successful, unless they are the outcome of a disposition on the part of Churchmen generally, to enter into new relations with the Dissenters, more especially in country districts. The mere expression of such a desire by a large and representative section of Churchmen would soon lead to its practical realisation, and no one knows better than the present writer that not even the best devised and most ably worked out scheme, let alone the mere suggestions offered above, can produce this result otherwise.

<sup>1</sup> Of course this statement is intended to apply only to radical changes. That short of this a clergyman may take his own line as regards the Dissenters, goes without asking.

## PART III

### THE ALIENATED CLASSES

“Sind nun diese Zustände Zeichen eines allgemeinen Rückgang's der Menschheit, oder verbirgt sich in ihnen ein Fortschritt, den wir nur zunächst beschäftigt sehen, alte Formen des religiösen Lebens zu zerbrechen, der uns aber nicht hoffnungslos über einstige Wiedererzeugung neuer lässt?”  
—HERMANN LOTZE.



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## CHAPTER I

### LIMITATION OF THE INQUIRY

THE subjects with which we have thus far been concerned are of a comparatively definite and limited nature, though capable of being regarded under a vast variety of aspects. We now, however, have to do not with existing and established institutions, but with sentiments and opinions which, though they often express themselves in a determinate and intelligible form, more often remain indefinite and unpronounced, and require the most patient and careful analysis in order to be understood. And not merely are these negative views often vague and indefinite, they are also in different cases most widely different from each other. For the divergence from orthodoxy assumes the most various forms as regards both its nature and extent ; and, though it is no doubt true that those who hold *orthodox* opinions likewise differ widely amongst themselves, yet in this latter case the differences are less strongly marked, in proportion as orthodoxy tends more to uniformity. Our present subject then requires even more than those former ones, that great care should be taken as regards the particularisation of those to whom it is intended to refer.

For this purpose, it will be well briefly to consider, what is the nature of the limitation which we impose on ourselves by examining into the position of the classes

in question not as regards Christianity in general, nor yet as regards the Christian Churches taken together, but specially as regards the Church of England.

Of course, we shall be obliged to disregard this limitation, in so far as that it will be necessary to discuss the subject under its more general aspects previous to narrowing down the consideration of it to the single head of enquiry above referred to. Nevertheless, our *ultimate* object is to determine the relation of negative opinion to the Church of England, and therefore, as we just now said, the question arises as to the nature and extent of this limitation. Now, obviously the Church of England and other religious denominations stand in many respects on the same footing as regards those who deny, or who are indifferent to, the Christian faith in its received form. Churchmen and Nonconformists profess to maintain in common a certain residuum of belief which, though probably incapable of being defined to the satisfaction of all the parties concerned, is yet, so far as it goes, a very real uniting bond between them as against those who are otherwise minded. Most Christian believers would regard even this mode of statement as inadequate; they would prefer to say that, quite independently of their being or not being members of different denominations, there was a truth accepted by them in common.

At the same time, though all Christians stand *theoretically* on the same footing as regards those who are not Christians (or who are assumed not to be such), each society of Christians, each Church and each religious denomination, exhibits itself to those outside its pale in some peculiar way, and elicits a reaction correspondingly peculiar in each case. It is no mere difference in the externals of doctrine or ritual which is the cause of the different impressions thus produced and of the different reactions thus occasioned. To all such merely external differences between religious denominations, the undenominationalists and antidenominationalists are for the most part blind. These

classes of men do not, as is sometimes supposed, become what they are owing to their observation of the differences and inconsistencies existing between rival sects and parties, each of which claims the name of Christian. That observation leads more often not to denominational indifferentism, but to Romanism (or at least to some system based on an extreme assertion of authority), and it has been with a view to facilitating this latter result, that apologists of the Church of Rome have always laid special stress on the "variations" of Protestantism. On the other hand, the men *we* are referring to, think more of the likeness than of the differences amongst those from whom they are themselves parted. They are indeed often more alive to the existence of a common element amongst orthodox Christians, than these latter are alive to it themselves, and the fact that orthodox Christians disagree on minor points amongst themselves, is to them quite secondary to the fact that all orthodox Christians are agreed on the fundamental points of their religion as against those who are not orthodox. Hence, it is not the differences between religious denominations, *as these differences are ordinarily understood*, which we require to bear in mind in considering the relation of any given denomination to the classes in question. But there is over and above these commonly assigned differences, and far more important than any of them, a peculiar way of presenting religious truth distinctive of each Christian society or Church, and which gives to each such society its character in the eyes of outsiders.

Now in respect of persons who have been brought up altogether undenominationally (who, however, amongst the educated classes are relatively few in number), the character of each Christian denomination, *qua* its particular manner of presenting religious truth, is a matter of trifling importance. In such cases, all denominations are commonly lumped together as equally deluded, and the only difference recognised

between them is the more or less reactionary attitude assumed by some of them in comparison with others. Nor again in respect of persons alienated—whether formally or in spirit—from some one or other of the Non-conformist societies by reason of divergences in respect of theological belief, is the character of the denomination in question, *qua* its manner of presenting religious truth, a matter to which as a rule great importance attaches, however much it may do so in some cases. On the other hand, the alienation from the Church of England, on theological or anti-theological grounds, does not necessarily, or usually, involve the withdrawal of all interest in the Church's manner of presenting religious truth on the part of the persons so alienated. There are two reasons for this.

(1) The breadth, comprehensiveness, and indeterminateness of the Church's terms of communion (her articles and formularies), not less than her practical liberality as regards the enforcement of those terms. Not that, on the strength of these considerations, the theologically alienated classes imagine that there is now, or that by any hocus-pocus of Church Reformers there is likely to be, room enough for themselves within the Church's theological boundaries. If they thought that, they would not remain in a state of alienation. Still, though no idea of that kind is entertained by these classes—at all events with regard to the present generation—they cannot lose their sympathy towards an institution which meets them in so many respects half way, which is never one-sided, and which if, on the contrary, approximating too closely to a mere loose and haphazard combination of divergent tendencies, may yet for that very reason be placed in a unique position for reconciling what now seem opposites. Yet at this point it must be observed, that the sympathy of these classes on these grounds towards the Church of England, is reserved for the more general and more old-fashioned conception of the

Church, rather than for the recent manifestations of Anglicanism resulting from the Oxford Movement. The Church of England, as formed on this latter model, is regarded by alienated Churchmen with the same indifference which is felt by alienated Dissenters towards the denomination from which THEY have come out. This, however, is only in passing.

(2) The ethical influence which the Church of England does not cease to exercise on those who have become alienated from her in matters of belief. This of course is far greater in the case of the Church of England than in that of any other English ecclesiastical institution, in proportion as the Church extends further and is more deeply rooted, and in proportion as the associations which attach to the Church are more attractive, more varied, and more national than any others which can be brought into comparison with them by other religious communions.

It is then under these two heads that the manner of presenting religious truth characteristic of the Church of England, discloses itself to those who have become alienated from her communion on theological or anti-theological grounds. These are the two sources from which the influence of the Church of England in respect of such persons is derived. Here therefore we have an answer to the question we asked at starting as regards "the nature of the limitation we impose on ourselves by examining into the position of the classes in question, specially as regards the Church of England." The limitation consists in this, that the two above-named considerations must always more or less enter into the discussion of the relationship existing between the Church and the classes alienated from her. Consequently, these two essential characteristics of the relationship will constantly assert themselves in the course of what follows.

It is time however now to enquire more particularly of whom these theologically alienated or disaffected classes are composed.

Conceivably, the description of these classes might begin either from that point where the separation from orthodox Christianity has reached its furthest limits, or it might begin from the opposite side and consider first, the case of those who are least far removed from orthodoxy, consistently with the fact that they are removed from it. There are advantages in both methods, but we intend here to confine ourselves to the second. Before, however, going further, let us explain what we mean by the difference between "those who have gone furthest" and "those who have gone least far." By the first class, we do not mean necessarily those persons whose opinions are the most extreme, nor by the second class do we mean necessarily those persons who hold opinions only slightly at variance with traditional beliefs. Those who have gone furthest, those who are the most advanced, we rather understand to be those whose negative opinions are the most thought out and formulated, whose conclusions are most the result of personal observation and reflection. It does not follow that because a man's negative position is in this sense more advanced, it is therefore in the other sense more "*advanced*" than negative opinion in general. That may or may not be so ; but it is not so necessarily, nor is it as a matter of fact always the case.

We propose then to start from negative opinion in general, the opinion of ordinary men of education, whose views tend in a negative direction. The class of men to whom we refer are those who have at least some tincture of culture, and who, both on personal and public grounds, are interested in religious questions, though they are without any special knowledge either of theology or natural science. The growing alienation of this class of men is a far more significant, and a far more serious, consideration at the present time than is either the practical heathenism of large sections among the working classes, on the one hand, or than the anti-orthodox opinions of

philosophers and men of science on the other. For in the first of these two cases, it is not a question of Christianity *losing* its hold, it is merely that the hold has never been obtained—a very different and much less grave symptom. On the other hand, in the case of the philosophers and men of science (those of them, *i.e.*, who are in this state of alienation) no doubt the hold has been lost, and lost more completely than in the case of the class of men whose divergence from orthodoxy we are about to discuss. But then the superior persons who proclaim their antagonism to received opinions in the magazines and newspapers, are not without other supports—real or supposed—whereas the class of men with whom we are concerned are either without any alternative compensation, or are at any rate comparatively so. Besides, we know “where we are,” and know also what line to take as regards negations which have found articulate expression, and which, emanating as they do from a scientific source, ought always to be, even if they are not always, definite and precise. But the alienated classes whom we are considering, are both much less conscious of the reasons of their alienation, and much less able to formulate their reasons, even so far as they *are* conscious of them. In their case, as we shall presently see, the dominant characteristic is far more a state of mind than it is a form of thought, and therefore it is much more difficult than it is in the other case to estimate its extent and to appreciate its significance.

But what, on more historical grounds, makes the alienation of the class of men referred to so especially to be regretted, is the fact that they are, by their traditions and associations, the class most fitted to form the backbone of the Church of England. There have never been wanting, since the Reformation, persons from amongst the literary and scientific classes to attack the theological position of the Church of England, though such persons have never



been so numerous or so influential as they are now. On the other hand, there has never been a time when there have not been large masses of the people who have been unevangelised. But here we have men who do not belong to the literary and scientific classes on the one hand, or to the uneducated or even to the only half educated classes on the other ; and yet such men, who are the peculiar property of the Church and have never before been alienated from her, are nowadays in a large and increasing number of cases, Churchmen who have lost faith in the Church's theology.

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## CHAPTER II

### THE PRESENT STATE OF ALIENATION

NOW, it is important to bear in mind the agency by which in most cases this result has been produced. This agency in most cases is not negative criticism at first hand, but rather the popular medium through which original inquiries of this negative kind are conveyed to ordinary unthinking men and women. We say nothing at present as to how far the popular representation of negative scientific opinion is faithful or the reverse ; we are simply asserting what will be admitted by every one, viz. :—that even moderately well-educated men, not to mention men of little or no education, do not in most cases come face to face with the negations of science (or of that which calls itself by this name) but are made acquainted with them at second hand. We call this agency or medium of communication—without intending anything invidious by the name—popular knowledge—not merely as contained in books or magazine articles, but also as diffused through social intercourse. For in the present day popular knowledge acts almost more as a social than as an intellectual influence ; what it does to stimulate thought is perhaps less than what it does to render life in society interesting and agreeable. Nothing indeed is more characteristic of the present state of society than the extent to which even the most serious subjects have come to assume a

popular form. It is a fact which is seldom treated with the consideration it deserves. We have no time now to attempt to estimate its significance, but we repeat, it is not our intention to speak of this fact slightly or mockingly, or to do more than simply to recognise its existence and to do justice to its gravity and importance.

In recent years, then, popular knowledge has made vast advances, and has at once promoted social intercourse and been promoted by it. It is not merely that science, literature and philosophy have become more easily and cheaply accessible, but there is naturally now more variety in the personal experiences—both theoretical and practical—of the members of society, and hence more both of profit and of pleasure to be derived from engaging in social intercourse.

It would, however, be a great mistake to suppose that this new attitude to knowledge in our own times has anything in common with that *rationalismus vulgaris* which was the most marked intellectual characteristic of the last century. That was an attempt to test the worth of knowledge by the rule of common-sense, the presumption being that knowledge which did not admit of the application of this test was an illusion, or, at best, an "enthusiasm." No such view is entertained now as regards the test of true knowledge, except by the ignorant. Not only are the poetry and philosophy, the art and science of our own days much less susceptible than were the equivalent products a century ago of a so-called common-sense interpretation, but it is not now expected that this should be otherwise; it is not now demanded that knowledge should be debased, but rather that men should be raised.

And besides that since the eighteenth century the higher knowledge has become intrinsically less popular, the public to whom it is presented, though far larger now than it was then, is for this very reason less educated and less capable therefore of making

this knowledge its own. That limited society of the ruling classes, so powerfully described in Trevelyan's *Life of Charles James Fox*, in which every one knew all about every one else, in which each man occupied a recognised position, and in which the attainments and information of each man were dictated to him by the prevailing social tone, has partly ceased to exist, but still more, so far as it does exist, is insignificant in its relative proportions. Instead of that, we have now vast populations of men, the most variously endowed in character and circumstance, divided into different sections, each struggling under the conditions of partial development for a larger measure of light and for a higher degree of life. Hence, the aim now is to democratise the contents of knowledge, which, however, is very different from saying that knowledge is only to be valued in so far as it is knowable to the ordinary uninformed man.

What then is the significance for our present purpose of this fact? the fact, viz., that the ideas of most people on most subjects—more especially as regards what are called ultimate truths—come to them by steps usually more than once removed from their original sources?

In considering this question, it will not be necessary to discuss the value of the current popular negative teaching in itself, but only the nature of its effects on the public mind. We are not called on to go behind this teaching or to compare it with teaching of a higher kind. We take our departure from the existence of a negative, or a negatively disposed, body of opinion in society, which is at once the product and the exciting cause of a negative popular literature. Whatever may be the teaching of science strictly so-called, there can be no doubt that the prevailing literary interpretation of science is more often than not hostile to the received religion, and is not easily reconcilable even with natural religion in the sense

which that phrase has hitherto been commonly understood. Men of letters who undertake to explain the bearing of science on religion to men in general, for the most part represent the relation as consisting in an antagonism, or at least in an opposition which requires that radical changes should take place in the popular conception of religion before it can be made to disappear. Sometimes these men of letters are also authoritative men of science; sometimes they are merely, in a general sense, accurate investigators and conscientious interpreters, though without any special knowledge of physical science. Sometimes, on the other hand, they are mere men of straw, who no more deserve to be trusted than do many of the apologists who write on the other side. Our point is, that popular literary science—whatever may be the case as regards science strictly so-called—is at the present time, to a great extent, anti-orthodox. And the same may be said likewise not indeed of society as a whole, but of a large section of society, to whom this negative literature is addressed and by whose wants it has been suggested.

We take our start then from this body of negative opinion, both as it finds expression in popular literature and in the intercourse of men with each other.

(1) Let us first attempt to determine what are the *kinds* of questions in regard to which the disturbing and unsettling effects of this influence most make themselves felt.

We notice then that it is not so much that the Christian religion is now directly attacked either on its historical or its dogmatic side (though it *is* attacked under both these aspects) as that the necessary presuppositions not only of this, but of any and every, religion are, if not denied, at least called in question. For it cannot be too strongly insisted that it is this general doubt, and not any more specific allegations destructive of orthodoxy, which in recent times has

most seized hold of the public mind. Mere heretical objections to the received contents of Christianity do not now excite nearly so much interest in Europe generally as they once did. We see this transfer of interest from the particular to the general illustrated in many ways. One such illustration is the fact that orthodox writers have latterly shown themselves much more sensible than they once were, of the necessity of vindicating the essential reality of men's spiritual and intelligent nature, and this has led them to take advantage of contemporary idealistic speculations, even when the authors of these latter have not been themselves orthodox, or in any received sense Christian believers. There is thus something like an alliance on foot amongst persons who otherwise differ from each other most widely, on behalf of the general interests of spiritual truth. This tendency has been, as might be expected, most strongly marked in Germany; Edward von Hartmann, for instance, adduces the reliance placed by the faithful in Germany on the speculative Christianity of Messrs. Biedermann, Pfeiderer, and Lipsius, as a reason for his demolishing these theologians, who to many Christians would seem little better than unbelievers, as Hartmann indeed considers that they in fact are.<sup>1</sup> And, similarly, the apologetic value of Lotze's philosophy has been widely recognised both in and out of Germany, in spite of his rejection of most of what would once have been thought essential to a believer in the Christian faith. We have no time to give further instances of this tendency which exists, though to a less extent, also in England.

As another proof of the same position, viz., that these general questions, and not the particular ones, are now the most popular, we may notice that textual

<sup>1</sup> Or rather we ought to say that in Hartmann's judgment, this is the tendency of their views. C. P. *Krisis der Christenthum's Vorwort*.

and historical criticism on the negative side has latterly been weak and has been becoming weaker. Surely this would not be so, if the public cared much about negative evidence of this kind. Yet that such is the case, will appear to any one who considers how little work of any real value in these departments has for some time past been done on the negative side either in England or in Germany. In England, the matter and text of the Bible are now treated with more ability, and have had more light thrown on them, by orthodox critics than by their opponents; and though of Germany we certainly cannot say so much as this, yet there has been no German work of genius on the negative side now for many year past in these departments, and the best negative criticism in that country has rather occupied itself in testing the results arrived at (as it believes, prematurely and on *à priori* speculative grounds) by Baur and Strauss than in making any original contribution of its own.

The fact is that these questions, though they were never more interesting than they are now to scholars, are increasingly regarded by the public not indeed with indifference, but as overshadowed by other questions which require to be answered previously. For what the ordinary man wants is a working hypothesis by which to justify to himself the facts of existence. This consists commonly of the simplest elements, though it does not follow that because this is so, other beliefs confirmatory of, or involved in, the primary postulates, may not be held in addition. According to "a celebrated Roman Catholic Divine of the present day," as quoted by Dean Stanley,<sup>1</sup> the popular religion of the people of England, is made up of "a general belief in Providence and in a future life." Whether or not this description holds good to the extent thus supposed, there can be no doubt that it does so in a large number of cases.

<sup>1</sup> *Christian Institutions*, article on "The Catacombs," *ad initium*.

Now, these simple elements of belief are precisely those which negative science of the popular kind has called in question, whilst, on the other hand, the danger to those beliefs arising from negative historical criticism of the New Testament does not seem to be nearly so great as that arising from the mechanical and materialistic view of the universe. Negative criticism has in fact shifted its centre of attraction from these and other like questions to the consideration of man's nature and destiny, as conceived in the light of what science teaches. And in taking this step, negative popular science has carried with it the negatively disposed portion of the general public which is absorbingly and increasingly interested in the problems thus presented to its notice.

The present state of negative and sceptical opinion then, is due to doubts which have been raised as regards the first principles of religion. We wish to be understood in what follows as being concerned only with those persons whose doubts are of this kind. We have in view only the case of those who find a difficulty in assenting to the presuppositions involved equally in all forms of religious belief. It will perhaps be said that in England at any rate the alienation from orthodoxy is seldom of this radical kind. We prefer, however, as throughout, so here, to go to the bottom of the state of mind we are attempting to describe. A tendency of thought, as we have before remarked, must be judged by its ultimate issue, so far as this can be determined. We prefer also not to regard English opinion altogether apart from general European opinion with which it stands in much closer connection than we are many of us apt to suppose.

Yet, on the other hand, it is no doubt true that few of those about whom we are writing have proceeded to such extreme lengths of self-conscious and self-assured denial as might be inferred from our description. We are depicting not a set of opinions, but a state



of mind. This state of mind takes partial possession of many persons long before they are regarded, or have come to regard themselves, as unbelievers, perhaps even without any such result being involved. Nor in the case of others of this class who have gone further, is there necessarily any conscious declaration of the extent of their divergence from orthodox Christianity. Those who talk loudest in this sense are often not those who are the most really infected. We do not of course mean that there is not, on the part of many persons of this class, a realisation of what has taken place in their own minds and a corresponding form of behaviour recognisable as such by others. We mean that this tendency of thought is much too subtle in its influence to be gauged merely by observing men's outward professions and the opinion formed of them by the religious public. Few indeed of those who make use of the term "Agnosticism," and who inveigh against its supposed tenets, are aware how delicate and sensitive is this disposition, when it appears, not in its vulgarly asserted form (in which it is commonly an affectation), but in that form which it assumes amongst the best men of the class we are now considering. This, however, suggests to us to examine into the next question raised by our inquiry—viz. (2), as regards the nature of the influence thus exercised, and as regards the way in which this influence makes itself felt.

It is remarked by Mr. Percy Greg that "the character of unbelief, agnosticism—whatever term may least offensively describe that of whose diffusion we are all conscious—has greatly changed of late. It rests more and more on grounds intelligible to, but not appreciable by, the general public; upon reasons whose force they can feel, but whose truth they cannot judge, whose exact weight they cannot measure."

Mr. Greg makes this remark in order to draw inferences from it as to the untrustworthiness of the opinions of men in general on religious subjects. We refer here to what he says, not so much in order to

draw inferences of this kind as rather to comment on the chief characteristic of the fact itself.

Mr. Greg well sums up what this is, when he describes it as consisting in a feeling rather than in an intellectual judgment. Not that the facts accumulated by men of science in recent times have not, simply as facts, made a deep impression on the public mind. Quite apart from the conclusions drawn from them, the truths of science are seen now to have an abiding value in a way in which this has never been seen before. At the same time, though this better appreciation of the value of facts as such prevails and is on the increase, the public is still, as of old, absorbed chiefly not in knowledge itself, but in the application of knowledge to the problems of man's nature and destiny. So much is this the case that in respect to certain large conclusions of science, men's thoughts—both on the orthodox side and its opposite—have gone far beyond the mere consideration as to whether the facts alleged are or are not true; their main concern now is not with the truth of the conclusions, but with the consequences which follow from them, supposing them to be true. Thus the most recent attempts to harmonise religion and science (as the phrase runs), viz., Matheson's "*Can the Old Faith live with the New?*" Temple's *Bampton Lectures*, Drummond's *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*, all propose to themselves the question, not "Is evolution a fact?" but, granting that evolution is a fact, what then?

Now, this mode of procedure no doubt results partly from a belief, universal on the negative side, and wide-spread even amongst the orthodox, that the conclusions of science are in the main true; partly again it is due to the reason assigned by Dr. Matheson<sup>1</sup> viz., that "the personal determination of the truth or fallacy of scientific statements of facts is beyond him (the theologian *i.e.*), and investigation in this sphere is

<sup>1</sup> *Can the Old Faith live with the New?* p. 18.

therefore to him impossible." But as regards the public generally there is a still more powerful reason, or, we should rather say, a still more powerful feeling by which this method is recommended to those who adopt it. The reason or feeling to which we refer is the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of conducting an argument, either for or against the religious view of the universe, by successive steps, and of admitting that the evidence at each point justifies just so much amount of assent and no more. It is sometimes said that we are under no obligation to accept the conclusions of science, especially in connection with such a matter as religion, until the evidence for them has been fully confirmed. This is no doubt up to a certain point true; no one would think of endorsing all the rash and hasty speculations which are from time to time advanced in the name of science. But it is impossible for the mind not to be influenced by the investigations on which it enters; it is impossible for it not to see a whole world of new contingencies suggested by each fact brought to its notice; it is impossible for it not to be conscious of the direction it is making for, long before its goal is reached. Even practised men of science succumb to this temptation, though of course to a slight extent in comparison with amateurs. These latter see far beyond what they are taught at each stage; their minds are filled by all sorts of vague and conflicting feelings, for which science as such is not responsible; they construct out of the given materials a philosophy and a poetry of their own imagination. This is the mode of apprehension, the *feeling* of which Mr. Greg speaks.

Now if this is true generally as regards the effect produced on the popular consciousness by the announcement of far-reaching scientific conclusions, how much more is the same tendency likely to show itself, when the question comes to be not as to science in general, but as to science in its relation to religion.

When once the foundations of religion seem not to be safe, those who are impressed by this sense cannot resist the influence of suspicions which carry them far beyond the points as to which they are at present in doubt. They feel that the battle is lost, or at all events that it *will* be lost when science has become sufficiently organised to make its final assault. This feeling is part of the stock experience of hundreds of moderately well-educated men who, so far from having any predisposition against the faith in which they have been brought up, would gladly come to terms with that faith, if they could see their way to do so. Such foregone conclusions and such counsels of despair, it may be said, are irrational and unjustifiable. It may be so, but it is the way of human nature, especially in such a deep matter as religion, to act under the influence of instinct and unconscious conviction rather than on grounds of pure reason. At all events, if, as Dr. Newman and others who have followed in his footsteps are so fond of inculcating, the process by which a position of assent is arrived at is more subtle than logic, it would be unfair to deny that this may be so also with those whose course has been in an opposite direction.

This new view then, working more by the subtle power of suggestiveness than by the force of its arguments, has intruded itself into men's thoughts on quite ordinary things, making itself felt even in their social life and moral conduct. The two chief characteristics of the state of mind thus produced may be briefly summed up as follows :—

(a) The effect of this popular science is, as regards religion, a shock, and it has little or no compensation in other directions. It does not stand in any way *en rapport* with religion, and in this respect is very different from the effects produced by the anti-orthodox philosophies and theologies of former times. These latter have been very often, indeed almost always, the outcome of popular religious thought,

which has found in them a correction of its own one-sidedness. But the objections now urged against orthodoxy at all events *appear*, though we by no means say that they are in fact, simply and purely destructive. Hence no reformation by means of those agencies is regarded as possible.

On the other hand, the view of the universe substituted for the view familiar to the popular consciousness, has no independent power of producing a religious effect on the men whose state we are describing. It may, no doubt, produce some such effect on the trained man of science, though even in that case the effect actually produced has by some recent writers been probably much exaggerated, as, *e.g.*, by the author of *Natural Religion*. But whatever may be the case as regards the man of science, strictly so-called, the ordinary religious consciousness finds little or nothing consolatory to itself in the scientific point of view as popularly presented. Nor is much more comfort derived from the often-repeated assurance, that in relation to the hopes and fears of religion science is neutral. For, as has been truly said, "a system of nature complete in everything but the momentous questions of its origin and support, is of itself suggestive of these being still unsettled points."<sup>1</sup>

(b) But though this state of mind has no positive religious content, though the supposed scientific objections by which it is influenced are neither capable of being themselves used in the service of the traditional religion, nor yet of producing independently a religious effect, it is equally true on the other hand that, regarded on its formal side, or, in other words, with reference to the aims, motives and aspirations to which it owes its origin, it is not only animated by a religious tendency, but is almost entirely of this nature. Its interest in the facts of science is, if not exclusively, at all events predominantly, a religious.

<sup>1</sup> *Church Quarterly Review*, article on "Science and Religion." Oct. 1875.

interest. And yet this is not what seems to be the case to the religious consciousness itself when thus cut adrift from its old moorings. To a man whose religious beliefs have been thus shaken it *appears* as if this result was due to his having become possessed by the spirit and method of science ; he fancies that it is in the interests of scientific truth that he has felt himself compelled to relinquish his previous convictions. What really happens in such cases is, not that a knowledge of scientific facts and laws has disturbed the foundations of religious belief, but rather that the religious consciousness is unable to find in the idea which it *forms to itself* of science a place for religion. Men do not, in fact, form to themselves an idea of what science teaches, and then compare this with what religion teaches. They do not independently investigate the conclusions of science, nor, it need hardly be said, have they any capacity for doing so. What they rather do is to start from the religious side ; their way of formulating the question is, given the truths of religion, what has science to say to them ?

That men in general should adopt this method is perhaps not wonderful, but it certainly is a matter both for surprise and for legitimate complaint that this same method should be pursued by scientific teachers of the public when they trench on religious subjects. It makes no difference whether these teachers write on the orthodox side, or, as is most often the case, in the interests of religious radicalism. If at starting they envisage the facts of science under a religious aspect, if in reference to this or that religious interest they begin by urging that science has or has not anything to say, or that science is neutral, those who adopt this method, no matter what may be the nature of the conclusions arrived at in each case, are guilty *in limine* of an unscientific act of procedure. For it makes all the difference with regard to anything, from what point of view it is investigated. Conceive what would be the result if ethical questions were always

regarded from an æsthetic point of view, or *vice versa*, or if poetry was always criticised with reference to its correspondence, or want of correspondence, with literal truth of fact! Yet something very like this happens in the case before us.

It is true, no doubt, as we have before remarked, that the public generally, and not least of all that portion of the public with whom we are here concerned, set a much higher value now on facts verifiable by science than they once did. Their standard of what constitutes scientific truth has been perceptibly raised. *So far*, it may no doubt be urged that we are speaking of men whose position is really a scientific one. But science in this sense is a mere negative abstraction, which can only be used in relation to religion in order to show, either that as religious and scientific truth are not the same and cannot be proved in the same way, they are therefore mutually destructive, or else that though not mutually destructive, they occupy essentially different and distinct spheres. Whereas, the point to be observed is that what we call the religious point of view and what we call the scientific point of view may be really indifferent, and perhaps even opposed, to each other, so long as we contemplate the world only on these its two extreme sides, instead of gradually and without prejudgment, making our way from the two extremities to the centre, and thus at the same time more and more embracing the spiritual totality of the universe, whilst drawing out its separate parts into ever-increasing distinctness.

It would be beyond the limits of our present subject to attempt to explain further the nature of this problem. Our only contention now is that, though the view of the ordinary religious man in his state of alienation from religion may be up to a certain point scientific, yet that he has no means of determining his position, except from the point of view of his cast-off religious associations; the consequence of which is that his science becomes distorted at the

same time that his religion is not rehabilitated. And, as we have already seen, even the scientific teachers of the public accommodate themselves to this same habit of thought when they discuss religious subjects, or, as is sometimes the case, themselves labour under the same delusion. Hence, it is no mere paradox that the cause of religion often suffers from the over-religiousness of those by whom it is assailed ; or, as we should rather say, the cause of religion suffers from the unscientific religiousness of those who speak in the name of science. And yet it is far more than a compensation on the other side that the religious consciousness is so firmly rooted, and displays its strength even under such discouraging circumstances.



## CHAPTER III

### COUNTERACTING INFLUENCES

SUCH, then, being the nature of the negative influence brought to bear on persons of this class, we turn now to consider what, in spite of the disturbance and unsettlement thus effected, is the force of sympathy, sometimes revealed, but more often latent and unconscious of itself, which still in many ways, more especially by moral and spiritual ties, unites those who are thus affected to their old faith.

Our best course at this point will perhaps be to give a short historical retrospect of the recent progress of this whole tendency, considered both under its negative, and also under its sympathetic and appreciative relationships with the orthodox religion.

Dividing, then, the period which has elapsed since 1860 into two halves, we should say that during the first half of this period the tendency in the ascendant was towards a development of the negative or purely intellectual element, inclining those of whom we are now treating to a spirit of revolt. Whether it was through their being sustained by a deeper faith, or simply from the light-heartedness of ignorance, there was during the sixties and early seventies a great increase in the number of persons disaffected towards the old religion, and this was largely in consequence of the spread of the new scientific opinions which were

then just beginning to penetrate through to the upper stratum of popular thought.

For whatever may be thought about these matters now, there can be no doubt that at that time evolution and the Darwinian theory were popularly regarded as anti-Christian and even as anti-religious. On these grounds, as most of us can remember, an attack was then made on Darwinism and all its works by orthodox teachers and preachers, and the same feeling found expression in the popular religious literature of the period. This feeling of opposition did not, however, last long; certainly it soon wore itself out in the Church of England. The reason for this perhaps was that these new tendencies of thought were more productive of unbelief than of schism, and, as has been well remarked "the Church of England has always been more particular about practical unity in Church worship than about doctrinal uniformity, about schismatic heresy rather than unbelief."<sup>1</sup> The Church, in fact, dropped its antagonism (which it has since explained away altogether) to the new teaching, and proceeded to meet unbelief by intensifying the bond of religious and ecclesiastical union between believers. All this has been described, as has likewise the difficulty which prevented the Dissenters from doing the same thing.

The years then—say between 1860 and 1874—were marked by a breaking away from the old faith on the grounds above assigned. It was during this period and owing to these causes, that theological liberalism within the Churches came to seem to many of those who had previously professed it wholly inadequate and untenable. It was this same cause operating at the same time which evolved, as it were by the force of antagonism, that new Catholic tendency within the Church of England on which we have already said so much. It is in reference to this period and to this tendency of thought that Principal

<sup>1</sup> Dorner, *History of Protestant Theology*, ii. 63.

Tulloch—a writer not given to over-strong language—thus delivers himself: “The conflict of opinion passed in the main away from such topics as had hitherto arrayed on different sides Evangelical, High Church, and Broad Church to far more fundamental questions—the lines of which are not too strongly marked as theistic on the one hand, and atheistic on the other.”

And yet novel and startling as this new teaching undoubtedly seemed at the time, Churchmen were probably more attracted by it than they would have been by any new departure in religion or theology emanating from a more orthodox quarter. Not that in any rational sense it *convinced* them; that would have been impossible for them with such slight knowledge. The effect on some was superficial. Others became aware that here certainly was a difficulty, though they did not understand much about it. Others again were immensely interested in what science taught, whilst what the Churches taught seemed “stale, flat, and unprofitable.” A last class passed into that state of inability, rather than unwillingness, to believe, which has since become more fully developed, and on which we have already sufficiently enlarged. We are speaking of the alienation of the average educated man; there were of course those who went deeper and whose convictions were of a different kind. We are not concerned with these latter, but only with popular thought—though with popular thought under its more educated aspects.

During the last eighteen or twenty years, however, there has been a noticeable difference. Not that it can be truthfully said that amongst the educated classes there has been less of that intellectual alienation from the received faith which has been already described. During this subsequent period, it must be confessed, the seceders have not returned to the fold of orthodoxy, and in some respects they have wandered even further away from it than they had done in the previous period 1860-1874. But though the

intellectual alienation has not become less marked, there has quite recently been much more sympathy with the orthodox position on other grounds. This latter tendency has no doubt been partly occasioned by the fear of revolutionary excess and by the consequent reaction, general throughout Europe, in favour of established forms. The political view that after all we cannot do without religion, is an expression of this fear and of this reaction. But it is something much deeper than any mere desire to retain religion in the interests of good government, which is at the bottom of the changed attitude towards the Churches of those who have departed from them. If there is one feeling which more than any other is impressed on all recent literature and philosophy, it is *ennui* and dissatisfaction with the things of this world and an infinite sense of the sadness of life without religion. Men have not yet found what they want in modern society, in spite of its marvellous power of adjusting itself to the convenience of each of its members, in spite of its popularly diffused knowledge and easily obtained pleasures. Life in such a society, no doubt, makes men more sympathetically disposed towards each other, it enables them to exchange ideas, it engenders a spirit of toleration, it promotes kindliness and courteousness of behaviour—in a word, it exercises a humanising influence of the healthiest kind, both by emancipating men from their own small circle of ideas, and by bringing them into contact with the larger life of the world. And yet the feelings thus called into activity do not usually take deep root in the moral nature; men do not thus become *really* sympathetic towards each other, but rather simply appreciative of what each brings to the common stock, or at most, mildly amiable.

Nor must we forget the even less favourable side of the picture—the “shams” and “snobs” with whom the generation of moralists just gone by have made

us so familiar. Nay, have we not ourselves seen men transformed into something quite different from what they really are? men who have sold themselves in order to find favour with the world? men who have assumed—no matter whether consciously or unconsciously—a manner and tone and bearing not their own, in deference to what they suppose is required of them by society?

And again, it is of the very essence of our modern social intercourse that, in order to be fully enjoyed, it requires a constant and quick succession of persons associated together for the time being, not necessarily or usually on terms of intimacy, but merely for the sake of imparting information and supplying entertainment; and it is obvious that these conditions are not furnished by life in the family circle, or even by the acquaintanceship—more or less familiar—which arises between men from the mere fact of their dwelling in the same neighbourhood and having common local interests. The influence of these merely domestic and local associations is in fact everywhere giving way before the attractions of a widespread social intercourse. Now, the old family life, whatever its faults may have been in the way of narrowness and provinciality, was yet usually a *sincere* life; men spoke and acted as they really felt; alike what drew them together and what kept them apart was unrestrained and openly expressed. All the literature of the old world is full of these strong mutual attractions and repulsions between members of the same family, or between the members of one family and those of another. But this state of society having to a great extent disappeared, and being everywhere on the decline, there is much less encouragement now than there was formerly to the expression, and therefore so far to the existence, of any deeper feelings of men towards each other than those which naturally arise when they are engaged in social intercourse.

Let it not be supposed that in setting forth these disadvantages attaching to modern society we are insensible to its benefits and blessings, or that we are comparing it unfavourably with some imagined better state of things in the past. Nothing of that kind is intended to be suggested here. We believe that with all its faults the present state of society and morals is greatly in advance of any previous one. We feel how much there is in contemporary civilisation which is bad and wrong, but we are aware that there is a brighter side. We do not take a gloomy view, and we especially dislike that exaggerated insistence on current abuses and corruptions which, with writers of a certain class, is now so common. But for all that, we maintain that to men such as we are now considering, men with high moral aspirations and deep spiritual susceptibilities, the attractions of modern society not only are no substitute for religion, but are the very means of bringing into prominence the absolute worthlessness of life without religion.

This, then, we hold, is one—at bottom perhaps the main—reason why, in the eyes of these men, the orthodox religion, though regarded by them as indefensible on scientific grounds, has had an increased value attached to it, in proportion as the necessity for religion of some kind—and that not merely as a police regulation—has become more clearly evident. In other words, these men have become to a certain extent disillusioned of modern civilisation, and the result is a feeling of vacancy and disappointment.

Hence, the influence which these negative ideas have upon men of this class is penetrative rather than assimilative ; it upsets their early beliefs and it creates a disturbance of their moral nature, but it does not succeed in conciliating this latter, still less in bringing it round to its own side. For the attempt to attach a positive moral character to the creed of science divorced from the creed of religion, as popularly

understood, has not found favour with the class of men we are considering, any more than with the orthodox classes. There is always a public ready to listen to writers who insist on the general chaos likely to result from the anti-religious influence, as they consider it, of latter day science. On the other hand, writers are also listened to who maintain that the witness of science, rightly understood, is, if not on the side of, at least not opposed to, orthodox beliefs. But not much attention is paid, either by the orthodox or by unbelievers, to those thinkers who imagine themselves to have found an adequate substitute for the faith they have surrendered, in negative science and natural ethics. To both these classes a purely naturalistic system seems incapable of leading to these results, and this incongruity is but made to appear to them greater by the high tone of thought and feeling so commonly exhibited by the upholders of these views.

This, then, is the position in which men such as we are describing find themselves at the present time. Their intellectual and their moral sympathies are in different directions, the former inclining them to revolt against the old faith, the latter prepossessing them in its favour. They are, on the one hand, struck by the force of the conclusions arrived at by scientific men and by the negative application made of these conclusions by popular writers, but they are, on the other hand, united by deep moral sympathies with the orthodox religion, and, in spite of the attempts of certain eminent scientists, they find nothing to satisfy their moral and spiritual wants in the teachings of science.

For, as we have before insisted, science is not to these persons, as it is to those who follow it professionally, a discipline and an education. That sublime character which the author of *Natural Religion* ascribes to this religion, may really attach to it when it is the creed of a genuine man of science, though such

a man even then, as it seems to us, would have to be something of a poet or philosopher as well, in order for this to be the result. But in the cases to which we have referred, these moral and spiritual effects are non-existent, or almost so. Nor can this surprise us when we consider that these effects are the outcome not of science itself, but of book-reading and of gossip about science, not of personal communion with nature, but of second-hand information and inferential conjecture.

It may be thought that if these classes of men stand so greatly in need of religion, and if what keeps them apart from all existing bodies of Christians, is not really scientific knowledge, but merely science, or rather scientific objections to religion in a popular and diluted form, the dividing forces are after all insignificant in comparison with those which make for union, and that, therefore, a reconciliation is capable of being easily effected. But this idea would involve a total misconception of the point of view here referred to, and at the same time would recommend to persons thus situated a course which they could not honourably, or even honestly, adopt. Nothing is regarded by such persons with more disfavour than the attempt to suppress, or to subordinate, or in any way to compromise, truth of fact, in the supposed interests of morality, or even in order to satisfy their own most legitimate moral aspirations. Nor in what has been said, have we meant to suggest that these men have not a strong hold on truth of fact; it has not been our aim to represent them as the victims of an hallucination, or as beating the air in an atmosphere of illusion. Their information, so far as it goes, may be presumed to be trustworthy; their own inly felt fears and doubts are such as are not only natural, but such as, in the present state of knowledge at any rate, it is impossible to meet by a scientifically demonstrable negative. Doubtless they do at the same time go beyond the evidence; doubtless they fill in the



outlines traced by science with a background of their own imaginations ; "they have supped more full of horrors" than is justified by any cause shown to exist in the nature of things. All this has been admitted and emphasised. But the time has gone by when beliefs, or rather disbeliefs, of this kind could be dismissed at starting, and without further inquiry, as mere baseless figments of the imagination. Any attempt, therefore, to take this line as regards the persons in question is sure to fail of success, even if it were not, as we think it is, to be deprecated on grounds of morality.

Must we then adopt in reference to these men the abstract or dualistic view of science ? and urge upon them the desirability of keeping wholly separate what science teaches from what religion bids them believe ? This would mean a limitation of the field of certainty to those points which admitted of accurate scientific proof, thus leaving it open to the inquirer to believe whatever good things he pleased about the infinitude of matters as to which all that science can do is to confess her own ignorance. Such a point of view would not necessarily be inimical to religion. To religion indeed, understood in a certain sense, it might even seem to be more friendly than the point of view we have been attempting to describe. For in this latter case, the boundary line between the spheres of knowledge and ignorance is much less clearly marked, and consequently, as we have seen, the mind cannot help imagining to itself all sorts of possible contradictions and inconsistencies between science and religion which it simply would not enter into the head of a genuine scientific inquirer even to conceive.

Notwithstanding this appearance, however, it does not seem to us that the abstract scientific view is really so favourable to religion as is the view of those whose beliefs or disbeliefs are not based on this hard-and-fast line of distinction between fact and feeling. This abstract scientific view of course often, perhaps most

often, does not concern itself with religion ; its position is one of complete indifference, sometimes not unmingled with contempt. But even where this is not so—as has been above supposed—even, *i.e.*, where science relegates religion to the sphere of subjective feeling, and religion is recognised as having a *locus standi* of its own only within this restricted sphere,<sup>1</sup> we may say that the view thus taken is less favourable to the true interests of religion than is the other which at least *aims* at the reconciliation of religion with truth of fact, though it despairs of the realisation of this aim, and regards it as impossible. In what has been said above, we may seem sometimes to have spoken with scant respect of the heart-searchings and heart-achings to which this baffled pursuit of truth gives rise ; the impression may have been felt that we regarded the disappointment and vexation of spirit thus occasioned merely as indicative of an unscientific or non-scientific habit of mind. But whatever may be the shortcomings of this disposition, either on the one side or the other, however far it may be from having found peace either in believing or in doubting, we would not exchange it for the self-satisfaction of those who have made for themselves a way out of all their difficulties by taking refuge in an abstract dualism between the inner and the outer, between feeling and fact, between what we think and what is.

Having thus stated what we do not think is the course to be recommended to men who have become involved in this tangle of doubts as regards ultimate questions, let us now inquire whether there is no better way than that either of slighting and ridiculing the difficulties raised in the minds of such men—according to the method described above as morally

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.* “ We ought to have, and may have, a theory of the world (or religion), but we must not believe in it theoretically ; we must only allow ourselves to be practically, æsthetically, ethically influenced by it.” (*Fr. Alb. Lange*. See Stählin, Translation by Simon, p. 106.)

inadmissible—or than that of overcoming these same difficulties by the employment of the dualistic method characterised in the last paragraph.

Before entering on this task, however, we wish to make it fairly and clearly understood that we are not now engaged in the often renewed attempt to establish a harmony between religion and science. Our aim rather is to indicate what we conceive is the *state of mind* which must necessarily be induced, before any such harmony can be felt to exist. This problem will be discussed in what follows chiefly in connection with the Church of England, not because we believe that this Church has any exclusive ascendancy or monopoly of religious influence, still less because we wish to exalt the work done by the Church of England at the expense of that done by other religious denominations, or other religious agencies (whether collective or individual), but simply because the position of the Church of England, in reference to the classes of persons we have in view, has been throughout, as we stated at starting, the ultimate object of the present inquiry.

We wish, then, to approach the subject before us looking at it from the point of view that there is a great work of education which requires to be done, before any of the harmonistic attempts above referred to can be estimated by the public, for whom they are intended, at their true value.

Such attempts are, perhaps, not likely to be very successful with any class of men, but they are least of all likely to succeed as regards the class whose state of mind we have had under discussion. For men of this class are more than any others given to expect from the apologists more than these latter can do for them, and then to complain because they are not satisfied.

But not only are we not attempting to establish a harmony between religion and science, but it is not our aim to suggest any means whatsoever, no *direct* means at all events, by which those alienated from

the Church may be restored to her communion. It is neither our object, on the one hand, to advocate concessions and compromises to be made by the Church, nor yet, on the other hand, to encourage doubters and gainsayers to swallow their objections, and to embrace the orthodox faith. We do not ourselves believe that the time has yet come when such attempts can be made either on the one side or the other, without detriment to the interests of one or other of the parties concerned,<sup>1</sup> or more likely of both of them. Yet we do not doubt the possibility of a final reconciliation, nor are we without hope of a certain amount of approximation, within well-understood limits, even in the immediate future.

What, then, more precisely is our present endeavour? It partly concerns the Church, partly it concerns the classes alienated from the Church. As regards the Church, it consists in pointing out that the Church has a duty—a duty which at present she only very imperfectly fulfils—even towards those outside her communion. It consists further in giving illustrations of the *spirit* in which this duty ought to be performed. As regards the alienated classes, the aim of our endeavour is to convince them that in spite of their being separated from the Church in matters of belief, the Church has even now a great influence upon them, that this influence is even now, so far as it goes, helpful to them, nay! a source of moral and spiritual strength of which they are all too unconscious; that further, this influence of the Church might, if properly directed, be made much more than it is to serve as an educational influence to them, especially by teaching them not *what* to think (which in the present state of their minds towards the Church is impossible), but *how* to think about religion, and this, without any compromise or prejudice to their negative position. No doubt, as the after result of the method we recommend, changes would to a certain extent

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.* the Church and those alienated from her.

take place both in what is now believed by the Church, and also in what is now disbelieved by those outside the Church. But the first problem seems to us to be, in German phraseology, not one of the "dogmatic" but of the philosophy of religion. For these men have become habituated to an atmosphere of thought in which it is hardly possible to conceive of any attempted reconciliation of the old faith with the new as satisfying them, or even as seriously attracting their attention. In their case, therefore, the creation of a new atmosphere of religious thought must precede the recommendation of even the first principles of religious belief.

Yet it must not be supposed that what we are attempting to do, in order to meet the case of these men, is to reconstruct the Church of England *à priori* without reference to its actual and historical existence, and to the forms in which it is embodied amongst ourselves. We really know nothing of religion, except as a concrete fact of human history. Alike our ideas and our ideals of religion are formed from the religious institutions familiar to us. We can only determine what religion ought to be by examining into its present state, and by considering in what way and by what means this admits of improvement.

These remarks are not such platitudes as they may seem. For not only do they especially hold good of the Church of England on account of its ultra-conservative nature, but writers on religious subjects require perpetually to be reminded of the necessity of bearing them in mind. If there is no relation between what is proposed by such writers and the state of opinion amongst Christians generally, or some considerable section of Christians, the influence exercised is either practically *nil*, or else is merely alienating and destructive. Of course this latter is often the effect which these writers desire. But to those whose aim is spiritually constructive and reformatory it cannot but appear to be as important to keep in view the

present state of religion as it is to indicate the direction in which an improvement in this state may be looked for in the future.

Hence, we shall consider what actually is being done, before we consider what ought to be done, by the Church of England towards exercising an influence such as we think is to be desired on the religious consciousness of the classes in question. In other words, the order of our inquiry will be (*a*) the strength, (*b*) the weakness, of the Church of England as regards these classes.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CHURCH AND THE ALIENATED CLASSES— I. THE CHURCH'S STRENGTH

THE strength then of the Church of England, regarded from this point of view, consists in her power of making men feel the essential union which exists between things sacred and things secular, between what is speculative and what is practical, between what is spiritual and what is material. This tendency has of course its less favourable side, which sometimes appears uppermost, as, *e.g.*, when the Church enters into the sphere of party politics, or when Churchmen generally become worldly and self-seeking. But when seen at its best, the Church of England exercises a strong influence in the direction of what may be called a practical and working *idealism*. This is what, in our opinion, constitutes the strength of this Church as regards those who have ceased to believe. When, however, we speak of this as constituting the strength of the Church of England as regards these classes, we do not mean that this is a consequence of any preconceived statement or profession made by the Church about herself; we mean that, without there having been any perceptible reason why originally it should have been so, this has been, as a matter of fact, the effect produced. It is indeed part of the very nature of this characteristic that it

cannot be referred exclusively to the influence of the Church, any more than it can be explained independently of that influence. What we have in view, therefore, is not so much any formal or official attribute of the Church of England, as rather the peculiar "ethos" which distinguishes members of that Church in their ordinary lives.

Now, this latter, though it may seem a very vague influence, is precisely for this reason much more practically operative than the former, especially as regards the class of people with whom we are now more particularly concerned. For we have seen that the faith of those referred to is in process of dissolution owing to causes which, though acting in an opposite direction, are likewise vague and indefinite; hence, if these men are to be influenced by a counter-acting force, it must be by agencies which are not less general and indefinite, but which, instead of being, as in the other case, of a dissolvent nature, are contrariwise spiritually constructive.<sup>1</sup> It appears to us that the influence of the Church of England is very decidedly of this kind; its distinguishing feature is its extremely informal character, and at the same time, or perhaps—paradoxical as it may seem—for this reason, its practical operativeness. It is this influence which we wish now to explain and illustrate.

We do not intend in what is about to be said as regards the nature of this general influence, to limit our remarks by considering how far their truth is affected by recent changes in the character of the Church of England. We shall not now take into account, in relation to our present subject, the Anglo-

<sup>1</sup> If it be objected at this point that what is wanted is a definite religion, whereas what seems to be recommended here is an indefinite one, our answer is that the influences referred to in the text are not indefinite, if by that term is meant not positive. On the other hand, if by the term definite is meant "definite dogmatic teaching" it will have been gathered from our previous remarks that we are speaking of men who are not in a state to receive any such teaching.



Catholic Revival and the developed ecclesiasticism in which it has culminated. We cannot indeed deny that the undenominational classes of the kind we have in view, are in some cases influenced by these ecclesiastical innovations, but we hold that much more often matters such as these are of merely facititious importance in their eyes, and we therefore prefer, at all events for the present, to dwell on the influence of the Church of England in its most general form, and without reference to deviations in particular cases.

What, then, is the nature of the Church's general influence on that now happily large class of average thoughtful men, who are not so wholly engrossed in their professional or business pursuits as to have no time to think of other things? or rather, what are the influences of this kind which are most likely to continue to operate on these men when, as the phrase goes, they have ceased to believe? We are speaking of men who have received a Public School and often also a University education, and who have been brought up under the shadow of the Church of England. As we have said, we are not concerned to inquire how far the influences about to be mentioned are the Church's own, and how far they are shared by the Church with other agencies in English society. We ourselves believe that their connection with the Church is a very real one, though not in any exclusive sense.

The first influence which remains indelibly impressed on men of this class is that of their early religious training and education. Now, the Church of England leaves the utmost freedom in these matters to private agencies. She does not officially direct or superintend them, except to a small extent. So far as she does so, as, *e.g.*, in confirmation classes, the result is more or less a failure. Boys and girls are taught what they know on religious subjects at home and at school, and though their schoolmasters

(in the case of boys at any rate) are usually clergymen, the teaching of a clerical schoolmaster is in most cases very different from the undiluted professionalism of official Church teaching.

It is not our intention to represent that this state of things is wholly satisfactory. The actual religious knowledge imparted to children brought up in this way is no doubt in most cases very insufficient, in some cases indeed ludicrously so. But we are now concerned not so much with religious knowledge and instruction as with religious influences, and as regards these latter, there are many advantages in the plan of allowing children to be thus unconsciously worked upon by personal character, home surroundings, and school associations.

The type of religious feeling which this method produces is marked by extreme simplicity and naturalness, and by a corresponding liberality.<sup>1</sup> No after-teaching, not even if it is ever so broad and comprehensive, can have such a truly liberalising effect on the mind as this first teaching, if it is thus quite simple and natural. In after years, persons intellectually far apart, men holding different views from each other, and still more, men holding different views from women, yet feel that there is a point of union between them, though they know not where it lies, and doubt as to its existence. A large universal tolerance springs up between them, often no doubt disturbed and broken through, but always reasserting itself and setting men at peace with themselves and with each other. Where does such love spring from? and where shall we look for its source? Not chiefly in the lessons learnt in later years from cultivated Christian teachers, nor in the suggested compromises of liberalising Christian theologians, not in our experi-

<sup>1</sup> Liberality towards other men is not directly the subject of our remarks, but it is impossible to avoid frequently alluding to it, this characteristic being necessarily involved in a simple and general system of religion such as we are describing.

ence as men of the world, nor in the so-called philosophy of common sense. In none of these forms does "Catholic love" first take root, though they may all of them in their several ways be means to its development. We first became imbued with this spirit when we were simple open-hearted children, unconscious as yet of any other truth except that which we were then being taught, and from the impression thus received often afterwards inclining to regard this truth as the basis of Christian union. For men who have been educated in early life on the above-mentioned simple and general lines are often in their personal character more liberal than their opinions, no matter what the nature of these may be; whereas, those who have not had these advantages in the days of their youth, or who at that time of life have been mystified or misled, are often as regards their personal character less liberal than their opinions, liberal as these may be, and sincerely as they may be held by those who profess them.

But we pass on now to consider the religious influences of school life, as distinguished from the mere impressions received at home. These school influences as regards religion are likewise extremely informal and indefinite. Yet they may be the means of implanting in a schoolboy's mind deep latent religious convictions which may survive the assaults of scepticism in his later experience, and may then unite him in spirit with those from whose dogmatic opinions he wholly dissents. Such convictions are not recognised at the time they are acquired, and hence those who are most strongly possessed by them often imagine that their own certainty about them has been produced by what they have heard or read, after the period of adult consciousness has been reached. And of course as regards most matters of merely intellectual belief, this is true. But as regards the moral necessity of the primary truths of religion, it is doubtful if any certainty of conviction in later years

surpasses that of a schoolboy who has developed an aspiration after holy things and a higher life for the first time.<sup>1</sup>

It is indeed precisely because this high aspiration of boyhood—best described perhaps as the love of God and of goodness—is so exclusively of a moral nature that it is so difficult to manufacture it for the first time after the age of boyhood is past. For at a later period of life other ideas of God obtrude themselves—ideas involving questions as to the nature of His existence, causative energy, and mode of revealing Himself—and these later ideas often seem indifferent, and sometimes opposed to, those earlier ones which are simply and purely moral. And if it is in boyhood, it is pre-eminently in school-boyhood, that this moralisation of religion is most strongly felt. But for the life at school following on the life at home, there would be no expansion of the moral view, no idea of a moral kingdom, *i.e.* of moral agents co-ordinated and organised with reference to a common moral end.

In addition to this, the direct influence of the religious teaching provided at our best public schools is often considerable, and in some cases is even remarkable. As regards the Bible, for instance, the quality of the instruction given has vastly improved of late years, and this cannot be without its results in the present and still more in the future. Advantage has

<sup>1</sup> Religion in early life amongst ourselves is for the most part ethical, and takes the form of active moral effort. French writers, on the other hand, usually lay most stress on its impersonal and naturalistic character. *c.f.* "Le grand charme de ces monologues d'une jeune âme au face de Dieu et de la Nature venait précisément de la complète absence de toute personnalité active." (George Sand, *Valvèdre*, p. 231.) The typical German representation is, as might be expected, more metaphysical. *c.f.* the following:—"In der glorreichen innerlichen welt jugendlicher Phantasien kommt es zum Bewusstsein, dass über den gewöhnlichen Gedankenlauf hinaus noch ein andrer wesenhafter Inhalt liegt der als das einzig werthvolle und wahrhaft Wirkliche mit aller Kraft des Geistes erfasst wird." (*Lotze.*)

been taken of such attractively written works as those of Trench, Stanley and Farrar, and of smaller, though not less instructive, volumes, like those published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge on the *Heathen World and St. Paul*, to impart to the study of the Bible a more human interest. A boy is thus taught to perceive what a flood of light has been thrown on the page of Scripture by classical literature, history and scholarship. A method of teaching such as this cannot but have a conciliatory effect as regards any supposed antagonism between the parts of knowledge, and that this effect is being produced on the rising generation of boys and young men is in many respects evident, and with each succeeding year will become more so.

Again, some of the sermons of eminent schoolmasters seem to us admirably adapted to answer the purpose for which they are intended. Such sermons must from the nature of the case be more or less directly practical, and with the increasing size of our public schools and the more felt necessity of attempting to combat admitted moral evils, they have naturally tended to assume this character to a greater extent than they did in the days of Dr. Arnold's Rugby sermons, the larger number of which, though likewise practical, have also an exegetical and sometimes even a doctrinal aim. Yet in spite of this necessary limitation, there are not a few school sermons which must be classed amongst the very best specimens of contemporary religious teaching.

Something too is being done in class-teaching to make religious ideas more intelligible in their application to the past history and present condition of mankind. We could give several recent examples from our own private knowledge, of teaching of this kind which has been successful. The public, however, who have not this knowledge, can only judge as to the influence of these ideas from the traces of them which they find in the writings of schoolmasters on religious

subjects. We will give two instances of what we mean: the first of them taken from a period when the religious influence of public school teaching was just beginning to adapt itself to more modern conditions; the second more characteristic of that teaching in its subsequently developed form.

Dr. Temple's now forgotten essay on *The Education of the World*, which formed one of the once famous *Essays and Reviews*, was not in itself a great or original production, but it has always been commended to us by the sense which it leaves that the writer had brought its subject into the course of his school teaching, or at least that he had thought of it in that connection. Without knowing how far, if at all, this was actually the case, we can only express our belief that no idea could possibly be more fruitful as a subject for boys, than that of a gradual education of mankind working itself out through successive stages of moral and spiritual achievement, and combining the lessons of Greek and Roman, not less than those of Jewish and Christian, experience in one common result. Such an idea, by bringing under one focus all that a boy knew of sacred and profane history, would surely lead him to see unity where otherwise he would have seen only difference.

As to our second instance, there is not the same doubt with regard to its intended application to school teaching, for Dr. Abbott's *Through Nature to Christ* had previously been presented in a form suited for religious instruction in his *Bible Lessons*. We are not concerned here to enter into any discussion on the idea of these two books, which is, shortly, that of an approach to be made to Christ, and worship to be paid to Him, through the forms of nature and of social life, in both of which He is implicitly contained. But it will be generally agreed that this idea might become a very influential one, if it were applied to the revelation of Christ alike in Scripture and in ordinary human experience, and if

a boy's whole religious education were made to turn on it.

These, then, are our two examples (to which others might be added) of what may be, has been, and is being, done by schoolmasters to associate together the spheres of religious and secular knowledge as parts of a connected whole.

We may add to these educational influences of early life others of a still more general kind. For instance, in families and households there is a spirit of religion which always may be, and often is, made to prevail in spite of all religious differences. Nor have things yet gone so far, except in a small minority of cases, as to render undesirable the continued observance in families of the more simple and elementary forms of religious devotion—members of the same family may still assemble together to hear the Bible read aloud, they may still unite in common daily prayer.

Another influence on men such as we are considering, arises from their being constantly reminded of the vast amount of good that is being done through the Church's initiative, if not under her direction. Not only in the world at large, but often in their own immediate surroundings, the spectacle is presented to them of self-sacrificing efforts and self-forgetting lives which are called forth in far greater numbers, and are made far more effective for good, by the union and co-operation of men together as members of a common Church. In this respect, the Church of England is peculiarly fitted to attract the notice of outsiders on account of the practical and reasonable character even of her ideal of saintliness.

Lastly, there are all the influences of historical association and æsthetic dignity in both of which the Church of England is specially rich, and which, though some would deny their religious character, undoubtedly exercise this effect or something like it, on minds of a certain class. As regards influences

of this kind, the tendency of the Church of England in recent times has been all in the direction of increasing their strength. Yet it is the more ancient character of our Church considered as—"an agency by which the devotional instincts of human nature are enabled to exist side by side with the rational,"<sup>1</sup> it is this character which appeals most powerfully to the sympathies of the alienated classes. Not that, so far as regards her Logical defence of her position, the Church of England has given any adequate expression to this combination. But then—as the romancist above quoted has acutely indicated—the very weakness of this Church—qua its logic—is but the other side of its strength; indeed the questions suggested by this weakness could not have been so constantly asked, unless the Church had had a strength of her own, not derived from abstract logic, a "*fons veritatis* within," of which she was unconscious. Now there are amongst the alienated classes not a few persons who are far more favourably impressed by this weakness of the Church of England as witnessing to her real strength, than they would be by even the most logically conclusive statement made in answer to the question, "How can we know the truth at all?"

Such persons, however, belong probably rather to the more cultivated section, than to the majority, of the alienated classes, whilst our aim is to take chiefly into account those influences of the Church of England which affect the majority. Looking then to our main contention and to the sum of what has been, and still more of what might be, urged in its support, we regard this merely general influence of the Church of England as a very strong one, more especially in relation to those classes of the community who will have nothing to say to the specific teaching either of this Church or of any

<sup>1</sup> Refer for this quotation, as likewise for what follows, to "John Inglesant," by T. H. Shorthouse, vol. ii., pp. 383-386.



other. Or if the Church of England does not exercise a strong influence on all the undenominational classes, she at all events does so on those belonging to the class whom we have described. Nowhere else in Europe is there anything like it ; in no other country, either Catholic or Protestant, is there to be found a Church which retains its hold over such a large section of educated men by whom its dogmatic teaching is rejected.

Now, we say that in England this moral and spiritual influence which the Anglican Church is so powerful in recommending, acts on the classes of men who are in this state of theological alienation as a counteracting force to that other influence which, whether it ought to do so or not, does as a matter of fact tend to discredit religion of any and every kind. The strength of the Church of England as regards these classes consists precisely in this its power of making them *feel* religion as a principle, operative in their lives even after they have ceased to believe in any formally enunciated religious truth. Professed theologians and professed men of science are alike disdainful of this state of mind, which neither of them are in a position to understand. It is of course not satisfactory, nor have we endeavoured to represent that it is more than the best that can be hoped for under the given conditions. Yet those who are thus disposed may be at heart more religious than either the believers or disbelievers of a more definite type. Nor are men who are in this state, and who live accordingly, less honest than are those who belong to the other two classes just mentioned.

But we are not now concerned either with the merit or demerit of this class of men. What we are concerned with is their relation to the Church of England, which is what we have described. We cannot, however, forbear from saying that, little as the Church takes to herself any honour for this relationship, it is in reality one of the facts of which

she has most reason to be proud, and perhaps that one which is most likely to be a source of strength to her in the future. For it is as important that a Church should be able to support men's faith after they have ceased to believe, as it is that the faith of those who do believe should be made deeper and stronger, and certainly not less important than that the denials of disbelievers should be refuted.

## CHAPTER V

### THE CHURCH AND THE ALIENATED CLASSES— II. THE CHURCH'S WEAKNESS

SUCH then being, in our judgment, what constitutes the strength of the Church of England as regards the classes referred to, we pass on now to consider in what consists the weakness of this Church as regards these same classes.

(I.) *Non-recognition.* These general impressions, influences, and associations on which we have dwelt, have no doubt, as we have said, a deep latent strength. Their tendency, so far as they take root in the character, is to produce a sense of moral harmony, which, even in its more perverted form of mere contented acquiescence in the established order, is often at bottom an anticipation of the higher life of the spirit. But there is too much disposition on the part of Church people to regard the persons who are in this state, as if they were necessarily in agreement with the Church's theological position, or at all events, to refuse to recognise the divergence of such persons from orthodox opinions, even where there can be no doubt as to its existence.

Now, this arises from different causes in different cases, which latter require to be discriminated.

The *rationale* of this non-recognition in the better class of cases is as follows : As negative opinions are

due, in the manner above described, not to science alone but also to the popular imagination which interprets science, so orthodox opinions are not less of a popular and non-scientific character. Men who have received a merely general and literary education are no better acquainted with systematic theology than the alienated classes are with natural science. Orthodox Church people then—not being in a position to understand the facts—find great difficulty in believing in the reality of any mere differences of opinion keeping other men apart from themselves. For they are united to these other men by moral and spiritual ties the nature of which they can appreciate, whilst the nature of the differences is to a great extent beyond their comprehension. No doubt when such differences of opinion are fully revealed to them, they are surprised and shocked, but they are nevertheless usually not at all disposed to bring to light, or seriously to examine into, causes of division arising from this source. This, we repeat, is the *rationale* of non-recognition in the better class of cases. On the other hand, the baser sort of religionists in the Church of England, though no doubt often behaving intolerantly, and sometimes intolerably, towards those who differ from themselves, are yet in the main anxious to avoid a rupture with them. They prefer a working arrangement, a means of making the ecclesiastical machine move easily and without friction, and this is similarly the case with those whose religion is predominantly political, or, in the lower sense, practical. Taken as a whole, the behaviour of Church people in regard to this matter is timid, given to compromise, and anxious to smooth over difficulties by temporary makeshifts. This constitutes, as we believe, one chief cause of the Church's weakness in respect of the classes alienated from her.

The Church of England practically refuses to recognise a difficulty which is only aggravated by being concealed, though this may be, and most often

is, done with the best intentions. We say practically, because we do not of course mean that the Church is called on officially to recognise those who stand to her in the relation above described ; we mean a more frank and thorough recognition by Churchmen of the true state of the case as regards those who are neither Churchmen nor orthodox Dissenters. Such recognition is a necessary first step to an improved relation between Churchmen and those alienated from the Church on the above-mentioned grounds, and the absence of it is a barrier to any further progress being made in this direction.

We do full justice to those who set themselves in opposition to this course. What they conscientiously believe is that by endeavouring to hush up these differences of opinion, and by affecting to disbelieve in their reality, they can cause them to disappear, if not at once, at least by slow degrees. And no doubt in many cases this plan succeeds, for the profession of such differences is often a mere caprice or a fashion hastily adopted. Yet in other cases, the gain thus obtained is purchased by the partial or complete loss of moral sincerity, whilst not unfrequently the plan altogether breaks down and only drives those on whom it is practised into further revolt.

We will now proceed to furnish some examples of the Church's weakness as arising from non-recognition.

(i.) Fathers and mothers of families when they find their grown-up children departing, or varying, from their own ways of thinking in matters of religion, usually thenceforward either drop the subject altogether, or, if they refer to it, do so only in order to express their displeasure at the divergence of opinion which they have observed to exist. This is a mistake. What they ought rather to do is,—To ascertain how far the split has gone? To what causes it is due? What amount of common ground still remains? The business of parents, in short, is to try

and make out what the true state of the case requires, and then to act as best they can in the interests of their children, whilst at the same time respecting their independence. Of course there will be all sorts of differences in the mode of action required in each case, according as parents and children differ respectively amongst themselves. But in most cases it will be found that more good than harm results from the facts of the case being brought to light. In some cases it will be discovered that the difference is more apparent than real ; in other cases it will be seen that the difference is real indeed, but yet such as to admit of a very hearty agreement between the two parties up to a certain point and within certain limits ; in a third class of cases the vastness of the difference may create at first a sense of despair. And yet even in these most extreme cases, the interchange of opinions between parents and children may teach them to respect each other, and may make them more fondly attached by bringing out moral and intellectual qualities on both sides which before had been unobserved.

(ii.) Again, nothing seems to us less wise than our manner of behaving towards young men who, whether at the University or elsewhere, have become imbued with sceptical or revolutionary opinions. To laugh at these men or to doubt their sincerity, is, if they are in earnest, the surest way of either driving them into complete religious indifference or into anti-religious fervour. It is of course true that this period of opposition on the part of young men is often, perhaps most often, only transitional ; men, as we hear it said, " settle down as they grow older ; " meantime, it is held that " young men will be young men," in their opinions as in everything else ; or it is urged that " every puppy must have the distemper," and so on. Such is the popular view, and we do not deny that it is borne out by frequent examples. Yet no one will pretend that the state of mind which it implies is altogether

a healthy one or that there can be much to be proud of in a way of behaving towards young men which does so little to inculcate in them a spirit of fearlessness combined with reverence, in their treatment of religion.

(iii.) Lastly, as regards this subject, we think there might be more recognition of the existing state of things than there in fact is on the part of the clergy. In their defence, it must be admitted that these differences of opinion have only quite recently increased to such an extent as to render themselves felt in this aggravated form, and no doubt by many it would be denied that matters have gone so far as this even now. We know too how hard it is for a clergyman to see with the eyes of other men and thus to arrive at a comprehension of the true state of the case. Nor are the difficulties in the way of his doing this by any means wholly self caused. For whatever may be the case as regards the poorer and less educated of his parishioners, in polite society the facts are more or less veiled from his eyes, or at least are not exhibited in anything like their full extent. And yet in spite of these and other reasons, the nature and strength of which we are well able to appreciate, it cannot but seem strange that men who in most cases have had the advantage of a University education, or who, failing that, have at least not been isolated from the society of their contemporaries, should so often close their eyes to what is going on amongst those with whom they habitually associate. Nor can we suppose that our clergy would have been seized with this fatal blindness, if they had not tended of late years, as we have all along insisted they have done, to become more and more a professional class—a class governed by its own laws and judging the facts of life by its own predetermined rules. This ecclesiastical bias is not inconsistent with, but is rather promoted by, that increased earnestness and activity with which in all fairness the clergy of the

Church of England must nowadays be credited. It is this class, or we should rather say, this caste, spirit which justifies its own indifference to individual cases, such as those above described, by reference to the "general prevalence of unbelief," which, even when it is professedly tolerant, forbids all exchange of confidences by the unnatural and priestly air which it assumes when religious subjects are being freely and frankly discussed, or, finally, which, in its anxiety to secure men's outward allegiance, ignores their inly-felt doubts. We have said that this is a class or caste spirit, and hence it is not surprising that individual clergymen by whom it is exhibited are often personally estimable. Yet until this spirit is extinct, there is no hope that any improvement in the present state of divided opinion on religious subjects will be effected by means of the clergy.

Our suggestion then as regards this first cause of weakness from which the Church suffers is that, at the same time that those deep moral and spiritual influences of which we have spoken should be further cultivated and enlarged, there should be a parallel movement on the part of the Church community, the aim of which should be to facilitate the recognition by Churchmen of persons whose views on religious subjects are, or seem to be, fundamentally different from their own.

We have said that we should not recommend this recognition thus strongly, if the differences of opinion referred to were not widely spread and deeply rooted. But if such is the character of these differences, is it not also true, on the other hand, that the cementing bonds of union are at the present time exceptionally strong? No one can doubt that men and women of all shades of opinion are now working together for moral and social objects more than they have ever before done; no one can seriously disbelieve in the compactness of the spiritual forces by which the members at all events of the upper and upper middle



section of society are now sympathetically united. Hence, in making this suggestion, we are but following the method we prescribed to ourselves at starting ; we are not attempting any *à priori* construction, but are simply obeying the dictation of facts. We thus learn, both that these differences of religious opinion have advanced to such an extent as to require a more thorough recognition and a more understanding knowledge, and also that little or no danger is to be apprehended from such recognition, owing to the increased strength of the forces now uniting the members of society together, more especially in their moral and spiritual relations.

What, therefore, we most earnestly desire in the first place, is precisely this increased recognition on the basis of this increased union. Unless this effort becomes a *social* movement in the manner indicated above by the examples given of the weakness from which the Church at present suffers in this respect, we do not see how any real improvement can be effected in the attitude of Churchmen and unbelievers towards each other. No doubt the employment of literature as a means of stating and discussing difficulties is, so far as it goes, helpful and valuable. But in England, literature touches only the surface of men's minds, and though it is likewise true that in England religious literature is still immeasurably more influential than any other, yet we must not expect this evil of non-recognition to be thus cured or even materially diminished. Those results will not arise until domestic, social, and ecclesiastical influences are brought to bear in the same direction, nor in fact until men in general become more alive to the dangers and inconveniences caused to society by this unnatural habit of ignoring, or affecting to ignore, the true state of the case amongst us as regards matters of religion.

(II.) *The neglect to provide suitable teaching.* In specifying this as a second cause of the Church's weakness in reference to the alienated classes, we do

not mean any disrespect to the attempts made by the apologists of orthodoxy to harmonise religion and science. These attempts, if we may judge from recent examples, are not characterised by any want of ability on the part of those who conduct them. We would indeed ourselves rather that theologians made more sure of their ground before committing themselves so eagerly to such large propositions as that evolution is all on the side of Christianity, and that the Darwinian theory is but a restatement of the Mosaic cosmogony. The present state of our knowledge is not ripe, and still less is the knowledge commonly possessed by these writers sufficient, for the determination of such gigantic questions. But though those who make these apologetic attempts may sometimes be over-hasty in their conclusions, it will not be denied that in many of the writings to which we refer there is much which is both highly valuable and highly interesting.

The reason why we entertain such very moderate expectations as regards the results likely to be derived from them by the alienated classes is, that there is a great work which requires to be done before any such attempts can be estimated by these classes at their true value. What then *is* this work? It is briefly expressed thus. We hold that religion may be shown to be so much deeper and wider, that its influence may not only not be, but may not *seem* to the alienated classes to be, anti-scientific. How do we propose to effect this object? or rather—for we cannot expect more—How do we propose to advance towards it? This, too, admits of being stated in a few words. What we desire to see brought about is a reformation of the religious consciousness, a different state of religious thought, a more extended view of what religion is and means in relation to the facts of life. It is not a change of doctrinal or dogmatic belief of which we are now thinking; not a surrender of religion to science, or of science to religion, or a com-

promise between them. Our aim is rather to place the men we are considering in a position to decide as to the questions at issue for themselves, than to attempt to prejudge their decision. In briefer terms still, what we want is a popular philosophy of religion.

This view of the matter is not likely on any ground to find many supporters, but that part of the statement just made to which most exception will be taken is the word "popular." The "philosophy of religion" in fact is considered as all very well, provided it is confined to philosophers, and is intended only for the private edification of the speculative public, *i.e.*, of a mere handful of persons. We are arguing, however, in favour of a more popular treatment of this subject, indeed, if that were not so, the suggestion would in the present connection be irrelevant. And we make this demand both on the ground that the alienated classes would at the present time be more helped by this means than by any other, and likewise, on the further ground that the satisfaction of the demand is now, to a much greater extent than it was formerly, within reach.

As for the first point, *viz.*, the needfulness of some such teaching in the interests of the classes in question, this depends of course on the extent to which our diagnosis of the disease from which these classes are suffering is correct. Assuming, however, that it is so, it will follow from what has been said that the remedy proposed is the one required. For our whole point with regard to these classes is that, far from being insusceptible to a philosophy of religion, they have already become imbued by a philosophy of this very kind as the result of an imaginative and unscientific rendering of the facts of science. It is a philosophy, inchoate indeed and unconscious of itself, but still a philosophy, because it takes a synthetic view of the data of experience. And it is a religious philosophy, partly because it springs from the despair

of a religion and is a sort of nightmare of tremulous fears and vague uncertainties derived from that despair ; partly because its sense of loyalty to truth and to the facts which it knows, is after all at bottom a religious sense ; partly again because its non-acquiescence in its own position and its dissatisfaction with the world, are due to the promptings of religion. But one view of the universe can only be displaced by another. Now, by a view of the universe, we mean precisely what is called a philosophy, which latter becomes a philosophy of religion so soon as it is brought in connection with the facts of the religious consciousness.

But we said also that a philosophy of religion is more within reach now than it was formerly. We meant by this that there is more sense now on the part of religious teachers of its need—and not only so, but also that, as a class, religious teachers are now more competent to supply the need. This, however, applies rather to what has been done of late years for the “philosophy of religion” than to what has been done for its popularisation. In the former respect there have been some remarkable productions, though these have not emanated chiefly from the Church of England. On the other hand, there have not been many attempts made recently to present this subject in a more popular manner, and so far therefore, when we say that a popular philosophy of religion is now more within reach, this can only be understood to have reference to the probability that work which has been well done for one class of readers may soon be made accessible—in a form capable of being understood—to other classes also.

However, we base our affirmation not only on what has been done with a direct view to this object, but also on the strength of the indirect evidence as to its felt importance which is furnished by popular religious literature. There is, for example, in the better class of popular sermons at the present day, a habit observ-

able, of presenting the Christian message not as an isolated and detached communication from God to man, but as associated with spiritual laws of universal application. And again, there is a deeper probing of the facts of consciousness in connection with such phenomena as those of sin, of the spiritual life and the redemptive processes involved in it, than has ever been achieved, or even attempted, in the pulpit before. Nor is it only in sermons that we find the pearl of great price with which Christian teachers are entrusted, thus enshrined in its appropriate spiritual setting ; but in many treatises, pamphlets, and short articles—in all that branch of literature, in fact, which is typically represented by the writings of Professor Drummond—we are provided with instances both of the great want of a philosophy of religion experienced by the public, and of the great services rendered by religious thinkers, popularly gifted, with a view to supplying that want.

At the same time, it cannot be said that the impression made on the mind of the public by these various efforts extends as yet far below the surface. The favourite method is still, to wait until some literary man of science makes his attack, or until some novel theory, presumed to be destructive of religion, has been started, and then to endeavour to overwhelm it by a shower of explosives, in papers at Church Congresses, in magazine articles, and in Bampton Lectures. The Church will never make much way with the alienated classes until she has, to a vastly greater extent than is the case at present, *a religious philosophy of her own*, not indeed “officially sanctioned,” but practically assented to, at all events in principle, and employed for purposes of teaching, first by leading Churchmen, and then by Churchmen generally.

But this much-to-be desired consummation is not likely to take place until the Church of England passes into a more catholic stage of its existence, and ceases

to be the mere organ of a party assuming to itself the airs of catholicity. At present, the most able and brilliant exponents of the philosophy of religion in the Church, however much they may be admired for their personal gifts, their "high seriousness," their learning and accomplishments, do not carry any real weight with the alienated classes, for the simple reason that they are felt to have other aims in view with which those classes do not and cannot sympathise. The efforts of Churchmen to promote a more thoughtful appreciation of the truths of religion will have to choose some other form than that of a mere intellectual adjunct to highly ornate church services. The application of religion to the facts of experience will have to be undertaken by men who are free from all *arrière pensée* of ecclesiasticism, and who desire the spiritual enrichment of humanity simply and purely for its own sake.

Meantime, let us be thankful that we stand where we do, and even that the party which, for the reasons above alluded to, in many respects bars the way to further progress, is likewise the party through whose agency such attempts at a philosophy of religion as those which we possess have, not indeed wholly, but still in great part, been derived. The triumph of that party and its organisation of the Church are preparatory to the future unity of our Church on a wider basis, and the relation of the philosophy of religion (so far as it exists) in the Church at present to the philosophy of religion in the Church of the future, is very similar. Always and everywhere where there is more true unity there is more true philosophy, and this is so much the case that the extent of the unity which has characterised the Church at each period has also been the measure of its philosophy.

Apart, however, from these considerations as regards the Church as a whole, what we desire to emphasise once more is the necessity, in the interests

of the alienated classes, of a practical application of this which we have called the "philosophy of religion," to the facts of life. The term "philosophy of religion" is so seemingly abstract and high-sounding, that we fancy it can have little meaning to an ordinary man in the course of his daily experience. Yet what we advocate is, not a mere course of study in this subject when men have arrived at a point of culture advanced enough to admit of their applying themselves to it with advantage. On the contrary, there must be an apprenticeship in youth, and a life-long education afterwards, continuously progressive. In order to show what we mean by this apparently impracticable suggestion, we will exhibit in conclusion two specimens of the sort of training which we think might be gone through in the early stages of life, leaving the training which is to follow afterwards—inasmuch as it is more easily imaginable—to suggest itself to the reader of its own accord. The remarks we shall make of course have in view the promotion of the habit of mind which we consider the most salutary as a preservative against that state of alienation from religion with which throughout we have been concerned.

There appear then in youth to be two tendencies natural to the mind which especially require to be pointed in a right direction, and which, if not so guided and controlled, are likely, and indeed almost certain, to lead to the results which we deprecate in later life. These are, on the one hand, the anthropomorphic tendency, and, on the other hand, the tendency to exaggerate the possibilities of knowledge. Let us then say something on each of these two tendencies, in order to show how religion would be benefited if they were more taken into account in religious education.

(a) What has to be guarded against then is not anthropomorphism, which in some form is unavoidable, but rather the prematurely fixed and exclusive

character which this habit of mind is commonly allowed to assume. Its fault in so many cases is that it tends to become stereotyped, to restrict itself exclusively to certain specified forms, and to regard these as the only ones under which the religious idea is capable of being manifested. Hence, the treatment of this tendency ought to be directed to expand the narrow and false ideas which thus become so readily impressed on the mind. What we have to do is to endeavour to elicit the substantial truth underlying the forms and appearances which are necessarily mistaken for the truth, to dissociate the truth itself—so far as this is possible at each stage—from the vehicle of its expression and the instances of its application. As Hegel said of the Greeks, that their fault was, not that they were too anthropomorphic, but that they were not anthropomorphic enough, so this may be said of mankind in general. Those figurate conceptions which the first effort of thought mistakes for concrete existences, if before a certain point is reached they are not enlarged, remain for ever afterwards as the essential forms of spiritual reality, instead of being regarded merely as its materialised symbols. Those definite rounded entities of the mind's own creation, separated from each other by breaks and spaces like the objects of the sensible world, gradually assume, if left to themselves, a character of fixity and permanence from which they can never afterwards be divested. The religious consciousness must begin to expand itself before it has become fixed in a groove, before its objects have been defined and regulated, before its impressions of divine things have hardened into thoughts. It is because the Christian revelation so easily admits of this process being applied, addressing us first as children of the one Father, then, when we know more, as brothers of the firstborn Son, and finally as sharers in the same Spirit, that its appeal is not made in vain and that its voice is listened to and obeyed.



Now, how very little there is of this sort of education amongst us, or of any attempt towards it! It may be said that in this respect the Church of England is no worse than any other Church, and that, no doubt, is true. But then other Churches are not so favourably situated as is the Church of England for exercising an influence in this direction. It is precisely because the Church of England possesses so many advantages in this matter and makes so little use of them, that her weakness stands confessed. How little advance there is in the minds of most men amongst us beyond the crude representations of religious truth which they formed to themselves at starting! Or else where this is not so, and there is some development, how seldom does the growth of the religious consciousness proceed naturally! How much more often is it not forced or jerked into an acquiescence which is more imaginary than real! Only in very few cases is there anything like a continuous development of the inner life which is really progressive without involving any harsh break with previous experiences. Yet the characteristic influence of the Church of England is just such as to lead us to expect from it this result, as has been already observed. We ascribe this weakness then to the Church's failure to realise her mission as a spiritual teacher. The Church either leaves men alone, trusting to the natural influence of those educative agencies mentioned above—which are, however, more a preparation for true religion than an actual means of producing it—or else endeavours to make these generally diffused agencies more operative by associating them in a very special manner with its own ecclesiastical system. In neither case, and the two cases are very different, does it commonly appear that any attempts are made to liberate the mind from its own natural trammels, and thus to advance the cause of spiritual freedom.

But we are now more particularly concerned with

those who are in a state of reaction against a Church which has so neglected their religious education, and whose hatred of the anthropomorphism which they suppose to be characteristic of the Church's teaching, has led them away from her fold. And our contention is that if these persons had been more educated whilst they were in their spiritual nonage, if the anthropomorphic tendency of their minds had then been made to expand, the result might have been different. We do not mean necessarily that the persons in question would not then have been alienated from the Church. That might or might not have been so, or rather, it might have been so in some cases and not in others. We are arguing the question of religious assent or negation on its broadest grounds, and not merely with a view to determining the exact number of people who might or might not have been saved to the Church in a given supposed case. It seems to us that if the question is thus broadly considered, we shall be sorrowfully obliged to admit that the present theological estrangement, at least in its most radical forms, might have been almost incalculably lessened, if religious teachers of all denominations, but more especially of the Church of England, had presented this problem of anthropomorphism in its true light, and had introduced corresponding changes into their system of education. Nor does it appear to us doubtful that teachers and preachers are now awaking to the consciousness of this fact; for there is hardly a sermon preached, or a book of popular religious teaching published, which does not enter its protest against some commonly accepted, but mistaken, view capable of being traced to the anthropomorphic tendency. There are indeed almost as many protests against popular errors due to this cause, as there are against the errors (due to other causes), of those who are avowed disbelievers in religion.

(b) But the Church fails in her mission as an educator not only as regards anthropomorphism, but

also as regards the limitations imposed on human knowledge. She does not sufficiently bring home to men the knowledge of their own ignorance, and her failure in this respect is another source of her weakness, more especially in her dealings with those persons whom we have now under consideration. In this case, however, not less than in the other, we must be on our guard against supposing that the fault complained of is especially characteristic of the Church of England, as distinguished from other Churches. On the contrary, the Church of England has greater powers and opportunities in this matter than are possessed by any other Christian Church ; nor even as regards the use which she makes of these abundant facilities, does she contrast unfavourably with other Churches, but very much the reverse. But it is precisely because this is so, that the Church's failure in respect of the matter referred to becomes so apparent ; here again it is a case of the Church not making the most of her opportunities, and weakness arising from this cause.

First, then, we complain that there is very little systematic teaching of this knowledge of ignorance imparted or recommended to the rising generation of Churchmen at that time in life when the mind is most fitted to receive it. The proper time of life at which to learn this lesson is that season of youth verging on manhood which no longer sees the world with the eyes of a child, but which is not yet "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought." At an earlier age, this teaching might be the means of repressing that sense of wonder which in childhood is of the very essence of religion, whilst, if it is put off to a later time of life, it cannot but create disappointment and vexation of spirit by reason of the illusions it dispels as regards the possibilities of knowledge. On the other hand, a teacher may explain to youths and young men without occasioning them any shock that both in nature and in human experience there are many things

which we do not know and which, in this life at any rate, we can never hope to know ; that the Bible, no doubt, has shed on our path light enough, and more than enough, for us to walk by, but that it does not pretend to furnish us with a key which will open all doors, even as regards matters of life and conduct, whilst on scientific and speculative matters it is **for the most part silent**.

Nor is it only by exhibiting to them the necessary extent of human ignorance that a teacher may be of service to his pupils. He may also help them by making *reflections* on this same ignorance, provided at least that he does not allow his own conjectures to be received as demonstrable facts, and does not pretend to be able perfectly to explain *why* it is good for us not to know more than we do know, and does not make light of our not knowing more, as if this were not a heavy trial and one which to some men at some times in their lives is not almost unendurable ! And if the teacher's conjectures are those of a good and wise man, be their intrinsic value what it may, they will often exercise a deep influence on the pupil's mind, even after the substance of them has been forgotten.

Such, then, is the value we ascribe to these lessons of ignorance in youth and early manhood. But how very seldom do any such considerations form a vital and substantive part of the religious knowledge imparted to young men ! There are, no doubt, individual teachers, whose handling of this subject is all that could be wished ; but very little is done, and less seems likely to be done by Churchmen generally, in this direction.

But we must not take account merely of the Church's sins of omission in this respect ; we must remember that only too often the Church is herself an offender against the spirit of the teaching we have been recommending. For how much false knowledge and unverifiable information, for how many confident

assertions concerning things unknown and unknowable, does not the Church make herself responsible in the persons of her agents and ministers! True, no doubt, the clergy of late years have greatly improved in this respect, and one of the most remarkable signs of the times (which was a favourite subject of comment with Dean Stanley) is the infrequency of pulpit references to certain matters of doubtful speculation which formerly were in great demand. But even this improvement is so unequally maintained, and is so liable to exceptions, that it is very difficult to say as regards many subjects at what point it is intended to draw the line between knowledge and ignorance, what subjects are held to be simply and purely unknowable, and how far in respect to certain other subjects hypothetical and conjectural judgments are allowable. We should of course be the first to admit that this plan of leaving the field open is very much what has given to the Church of England its character for liberality and comprehensiveness, and we should be the last to advocate the determination of such questions as those referred to by ecclesiastical authority. We look for further improvement rather in the same direction in which improvement has already been effected, *i.e.*, from the better sense of preachers and teachers, and from a more enlightened public opinion.

It is, however, an unavoidable weakness of the Church of England (whether or not the strength thence derived may fairly be considered as a set off against it) that she cannot by any official statements and declarations free herself from all blame in this matter. For, the amount of definiteness requisite in these days, could only be obtained by some such statement or declaration. Perhaps a time may come when even this may be possible; it may even not be such a far distant time as those who believe less than we do in the future of the Church of England suppose. Meantime, it is a thing to hope for and to work for,

that our Church may be able to dispense with her present ambiguities and inconsistencies, especially as regards the determination of some questions as insoluble, and of others as open or doubtful. As matters at present stand, the want of such determination is undoubtedly a source of weakness to the Church, and it is so especially as regards those who have been, or who are, in process of being alienated from her communion. It is of these persons that we have been thinking exclusively throughout what has been said above as to the necessity of impressing on men the extent of their ignorance as well as of their knowledge. The Church of England pointedly disclaims any pretension to infallibility, but she has never made this disclaimer practical by applying it to special questions. Until she does this, there will always be those who will refuse to accept her teaching—no doubt on other grounds as well—but certainly on the ground that she attempts too much, or at all events does not clearly determine where her knowledge falls short. And this, though a small matter in the eyes of those who have wandered far from the paths of orthodoxy, is yet even to such persons a cause of great irritation, whilst on those who are just setting out on this path, it acts as a powerful stimulus urging them to continue in the same direction.

There are of course other causes of the Church's weakness besides those on which we have dwelt in the preceding sketch. Some of these we have no space to discuss, whilst others will remain to be considered later. But as regards our present subject, we believe that the chief causes, both of the strength and weakness of the Church, are those which we have assigned. Not that in our judgment the Church of England has it in her power, by paying more attention to the particulars indicated, at once, or except very partially, to remove the doubts and to silence the objections of those who are unfavourably disposed towards her on the above-mentioned grounds. Whatever may be the

case in the future, we are not justified in expecting any such transformation at present, perhaps not until after a long time, and not until after many things have happened. But the Church has a duty towards those who are alienated from her which is quite irrespective of the question as to how far her efforts are likely to be successful in effecting a reconciliation. If any Church has a mission in reference to the class of persons we have described, it is the Church of England; she can, perhaps, do more for this class than for any other. For, there is probably no class which is more really attached to that which is most characteristic in herself, viz., the practical type of her religiousness and her humanising influence on life and conduct. It is by a more serious and thoughtful use of her opportunities, and by a more enlarged view of her responsibilities as a teacher, that she will best be able to fulfil her duty as regards this class of persons who, we repeat, are far more than she is aware of, bound up with her own future existence.

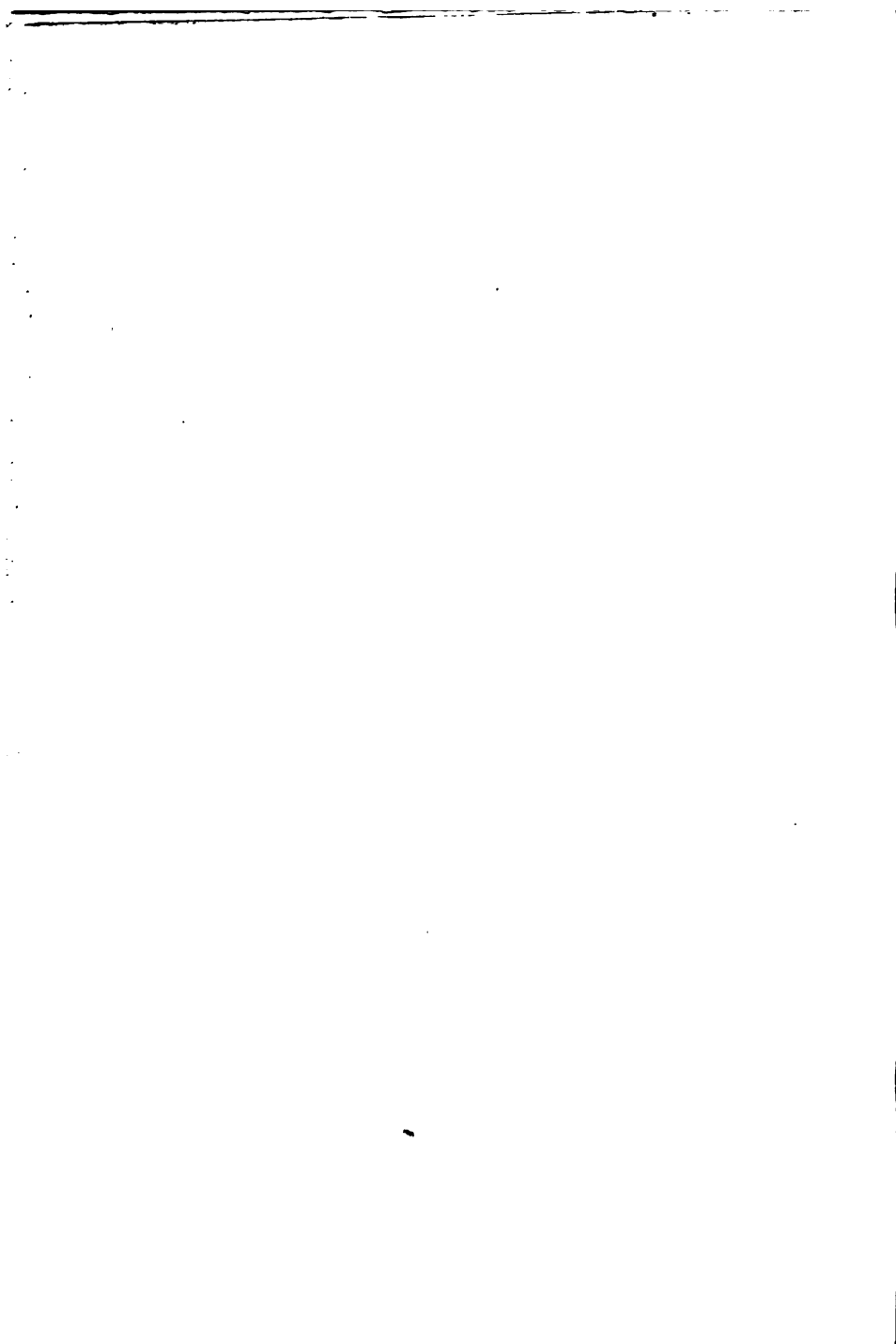
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## PART IV

### THEOLOGY

“Unless Christianity be viewed and felt in a high and comprehensive way, how large a portion of our intellectual and moral nature does it leave without object and action.”—  
COLERIDGE.





## CHAPTER I

### THE ESSENTIALS OF A CATHOLIC THEOLOGY

THE theological ideas of any given period are difficult to present in their systematic connection, not because they are in reality so many, but because the same ideas reappear under so many different forms. This has the effect amongst the Germans—as, *e.g.*, in the all-embracing *Handbuch* (so-called) *der theologischen Wissenschaften*<sup>1</sup>—of multiplying to a bewildering extent the divisions and subdivisions of the several branches of contemporary theology. In England, on the other hand, where the treatment of theological subjects is in much closer dependence on the life of the Churches, the theology of the age appears as exhibiting an almost infinite variety of concrete manifestations derived from the devotional instincts, as well as from the personal characteristics, of the popular preachers and teachers by whom it is for the most part expounded.

These embarrassments are due in both cases alike to the employment of a wrong method. A classification of fixed types—whether as regards the subject matter itself or as regards the views, tastes, and

<sup>1</sup> *Handbuch der theologischen Wissenschaften in encyclopädischer Darstellung mit besonderer Rücksicht auf die Entwicklungsgeschichte der einzelnen Disciplinen.*—Herausgegeben von Dr. Otto Zöckler.

offer, regarded under this its theological aspect, is the mutual coherence of its parts, and its reasonableness as derived from this consideration.

But if such are the ideal requirements of theology, how do they stand related to the actual presentation of theological ideas at any given time?

It is obvious—almost painfully so indeed—that the theology of Church history does not follow any prescribed order of presentation, still less the order indicated above. We can, indeed, in a rough way, explain the principle in each case on which the succession of theological ideas depends—as, *e.g.*, by reference to the general influences of the age, the relations of Church parties, the limitations imposed on theologians by the necessity of meeting the arguments of their opponents, etc. But such methods of explanation—besides that they do not attain to scientific precision—do not profess to furnish a theory of origination except so far as regards the historical antecedents of the ideas in question. They do not attempt to exhibit these ideas in their relationship to each other as parts of a common system. Nor do they even presuppose the existence of such a system, or regard the services rendered by successive theologians as contributory to its formation. In short, the ideal of theology, which we have represented as consisting in the evolution of a graduated unity throughout all its stages, appears to have nothing answering to it in the actual state of theology, as disclosed by history.

Before, however, we blame theology for its want of a more progressive conformity with the requirements of an ideal system, we should be careful to remember in what this conformity may fairly be expected to consist. In order to understand this point, we must conceive rightly of the meaning of the word Catholic as applied not less to Christian theology than to the Christian Church. For, just as “the Church is not merely ἡ καθόλου,” that is, “the Church in general, as opposed to the Church of a

particular place or nation, but ἡ καθολική the Church whose inward character is one of universality";<sup>1</sup> just as "the title itself" (ἡ καθολική, i.e.) "is given to a single branch of the Christian Society,"<sup>1</sup> just as "the real opposition of 'Catholic' is not 'local' nor even 'partial,' but 'heretical,' so all this holds not less good as regards the more theological application of the words 'catholic,' and 'catholicity'."<sup>1</sup> The theology of a nation or Church is not catholic or non-catholic, according as it does or does not embrace and do full justice to *all* the branches of theology. It may develop exclusively—or almost so—in one direction, and yet if it implies and presupposes the existence of the theological organism as a whole, and the existence of the other parts of the organism as united in a definite relationship with itself, if, i.e., "its inward character is one of universality," then, and in so far as this is the case, it is a catholic theology.

According then to the view here taken, the theological products of a given age would be tested by reference to their susceptibility to a Catholic mode of treatment. Each age has, and is entitled to have, its own manner of giving effect to the Catholic idea, and national and local theologies are no more anti-catholic than are national and local Churches. Nor are the forms, statements, methods, &c., of theology required to contribute progressively to the construction of a system. It is enough that the Catholic unity should enter into and give its impress to the theological determinations of any one period, enough that it should govern their motions with reference to each other and to itself.

This is what is essential. But, of course, if at any given time there are special facilities available for the methodising and systematisation of theology—then the theology of that age must, in addition, be judged as regards its opportunities in this respect. The nineteenth century, with its enlarged and ever-

<sup>1</sup> Mason, *The Faith of the Gospel*, pp. 248–249.

increasing knowledge of the sciences, studies, and disciplines ancillary to theological investigation, is such an age, and must be judged accordingly. At the same time, we must be careful not to treat theology as if it were necessarily an affair of system-making. This latter may be good, and may be required under certain circumstances. The *essential* requisite, however, is that the conclusions of theology at each stage should be such as are capable of finding a place in a Catholic system, though that system in any one age may only have been worked at under some one aspect.

But what *is* this Catholic system? and how can it be said that we have it before us to serve as a model?

Now, once there existed in the Church a corporate sense of what constitutes Catholicity. It was this sense which gave to the Church its inspiration in the selection of the books now contained in the canon of the New Testament. But this sense has long since been lost, lost so completely that our only means of now recovering it is to go back to those same Christian Scriptures, the catholicity of which was once determined by it. Nor can a Catholic theology be constructed on any other principle. For it must not be supposed that any value attaches to the systematic treatment of theology such as has been sketched above, except so far as the method and treatment of this latter proceed on Biblical lines. It is from the *Bible*, and not from modern speculation, that we derive the idea of a unity running through the parts of theology, and connecting them in mutual and organic interdependence to such an extent that they are strictly not divisions of this unity, but rather grades or stages in its development. It is from the *Bible* that the idea of the blending together of the elements of theology in their appropriate proportions is alone to be obtained. No doubt, in attempting to interpret the meaning of the Bible on these points we are obliged to employ abstract and speculative terms.

No doubt also theologians may and do differ amongst themselves as regards the exact nature of the interpretation preferred and the formulæ of its expression. None the less, however, it is with reference not merely to the Catholic idea but to this idea as illustrated by the Bible that all theology—all Christian theology at all events—must be tested.<sup>1</sup> It is this consideration which has been kept in view in the selection of the fourfold method of treatment above suggested, and which has led to the adoption of that method as the basis of the following investigation.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Westcott, *Epistles of St. John*, preface, p. vii. "The fulness of the Bible, apprehended in its historical development, answers to the fulness of life . . . the real understanding of the Bible rests upon the acknowledgment of its Catholicity."

## CHAPTER II

### THEOLOGY AND THE BIBLE

THE following extract is from a paper contributed by Professor J. A. Beet to the *Expositor* in 1885. "Exactly thirty years ago," he then wrote, "Bishop (then Mr.) Ellicott published the first edition of the first volume of his *Commentaries on St. Paul's Epistles*. Of those years no feature in English literature has been more marked than the number and excellence of the expositions of Holy Scripture which have followed the volume just mentioned. The improvement in this branch has been little less than a revolution. To go back now to the commentaries preceding those of Ellicott and Alford is to descend to a platform of sacred scholarship immeasurably below that on which we now stand. Of the last ten years the most conspicuous feature has been the number of popular expositions and series of expositions, some very good and others commonplace, designed to bring the results of the best modern scholarship within reach of all intelligent readers of the English Bible.

"Amid this abundance of expository literature, systematic theology has been somewhat neglected, and has indeed with some persons fallen into disrepute. There have appeared some very good books on Christian doctrines, but the number of them has been small; and efforts to build up a system of

theology, or even to expound in its various relations any one doctrine, have not unfrequently contrasted unfavourably with the consecutive study of the actual words of the sacred writers."

Now just as in the Reformation era the study of the Bible was a consequence of the revival of learning, this latter being itself due to the invention of printing, the consolidation of Europe following upon the defeat of the Turks, and the opening up of the New World ; so unquestionably in our own days the better understanding of Hebrew and Greek, of Biblical geography and archæology, and of the science of textual criticism, has led to an increased study of the Bible, and has perhaps indirectly been the cause, or one cause, of a diminished interest in systematic theology. These phenomena, however, were the results of other secondary and determining influences, in addition to this merely general one. At first, perhaps, weariness of the partisan controversies of the Oxford Movement had something to do with them. The productions of a man like Alford may have owed their origin negatively to this cause, which, in any case, is a natural one to suggest with reference to theologians whose best work was done during the two decades succeeding the secession of Dr. Newman from the Church of England. Yet, if it had gone no further than this, the tendency indicated by Professor Beet would have been of no very great importance, indeed would scarcely have required notice. But at a somewhat later time, other and different motives were responsible for the direction taken by Biblical investigations, which latter continued to be produced in not less abundance.

I. The first of such motives showed itself in an inclination to emphasise a purely Biblical religion at the expense of ecclesiastical dogma. Here again we may find a parallel in the history of the Reformation. For the zeal of the early reformers for the Bible was due, not merely to the influence of the New Learning,



but to that influence conjoined with another, which latter has been aptly described as "the spirit of religious reform." "When the spirit which sought the revival of learning joined itself with that of religious reform, it produced reformers who aimed at freeing men's minds from the bonds of the scholastic system, at setting up Christ and His Apostles instead of the schoolmen as the exponents of what Christianity really is, and lastly at making real Christianity and its golden rule the guide for men and nations, and so the basis of the civilisation of the future." (See-bohm's *Era of the Protestant Revolution*, p. 75.)

Very similar were the aims—allowing for altered conditions—of the Biblical scholars and divines with whom we are now concerned. These latter, in like manner, set themselves to exhibit Christ's character as the one and only true ideal of aspiration and endeavour alike for nations and for each individual man. There was, however, a new element contributed by the nineteenth century reformers, which consisted in a certain unique power of modernising the portrait of Christ without vulgarising it. For, though supposing themselves to be aiming at the simple discovery of the truth as such, their actual method of treatment was a subjective one, being really calculated to convey a picture of Christ as satisfying the ethical and social demands of our own times.

This point of view was far from being confined to England, though in no other country were its representatives more highly gifted or more in earnest. We see it in Germany—not indeed in all the so-called *Lives of Christ*, which were so plentiful at the time here referred to (for many of these latter were merely critical, and, in some cases, simply and purely destructive) yet without doubt in *some* of them—typically, for instance, in Schenkel's *Charakterbild Jesu*. We see it in France in the better and less frivolous portions of Renan's celebrated biography, and in the sermons of M. Bersier.

But without going outside England, we may judge how much some such representation was needed from the fact that all parties in the Church of England took a leaf out of the same book ; though of course it was only one party which did so for the theological or anti-theological purpose mentioned above. It was rather for the purpose of edification and instruction—a purpose to which it very readily lent itself—that this method became such a favourite in the Church at large. The period was one of immense practical activity, and called forth accordingly an abundance of practically applied theology, chiefly of this subjective type. Under this wider aspect it had—as preachers—Robertson at its beginning and Liddon<sup>1</sup> at its end whilst—in a more general sense under the same aspect—it had during its middle portion Stanley and Jowett. On the whole the sermons and writings in question are the best—and some few of them will probably form the most enduring—part of the theology of the period now before us.

We see then that this method of interpreting Scripture commended itself to Churchmen of the most different ways of thinking, independently of its special application by Churchmen of one way of thinking. Such a fact—together with the fact of its employment outside England—prepares us to find in this method a true “note” of Catholicity. Its very subjectivity—which might seem to conflict with this view—is but a means of illustrating the inexhaustible richness and many-sidedness of the historical Christ in relation to humanity. The same lesson is brought home to us

<sup>1</sup> In spite of Liddon's frequent protests against the subjective method, his charm consists in his subjectivity, more especially as regards the interpretation of Scripture. Cf. his sermon on *The Sight of the Invisible* (University Sermons, second series, last sermon). In that sermon, after the utterance of such a protest, he proceeds to give a portrait of Moses conceived as the hero of a nineteenth century romance.

But Liddon was not unaware of the value of “the subjective spirit of the age.” Cf. *Some Elements of Religion*, p. 5.

by the negative aspects of this method, viz., in respect of the clearance which it effected of the hindrances to the appreciation of the historical Christ. This applies to the overlaying of Scripture with dogma generally. Against this danger both the Liberal and High Church Schools directed a great part of their respective energies. The Liberal theologians were no doubt men of more distinction both as scholars and as teachers, and they had rendered generally far more important services to Biblical literature. Yet it is doubtful if even the antidote which the Liberals administered to this unscriptural Evangelicalism was more efficacious than that of some of their High Church contemporaries. Nothing, for instance, could be better in this respect than the treatment of the doctrine of the atonement by the lamented Canon Norris of Bristol,<sup>1</sup> or than the treatment of the doctrine of election by the learned rector of Honiton—Prebendary Sadler.<sup>2</sup>

What we have said so far as regards the significance of this tendency, leads to the conclusion that good and valuable work was done at this time pre-eminently by the Liberal school, but more or less by all schools, of thought in the Church of England towards the pre-

<sup>1</sup> Norris, *Elements of Theology*, pp. 163-240. Take, e.g., the following passage on p. 168: "It has been roughly stated" (by Oxenham, i.e.) "that for a thousand years (down to Anselm's time) the Church taught that Christ paid and the Evil One received the ransom; and that since then the Church has been divided between the Anselmic notion of a transaction whereby the mercy gave satisfaction to the justice of God and the Calvinistic idea of a transaction whereby the Son appeased His offended Father. A healthy conscience recoils from all three ideas. "φεῦ τῆς ὑβρεως—out upon the insulting thought!" is Gregory Nazianzen's protest against the first; the second is artificial and scholastic; the third shocks us. None of the three is to be found in Scripture."

<sup>2</sup> For Sadler's criticism, see his *Commentary on the Romans*, chap. ix. *in loco*. The Commentary belongs to a later date than that of which we are here speaking. But the teaching of the author's earlier works as regards the doctrine of election is precisely similar.

sensation of the historical Christ, and towards the removal of all the doctrinal additions, embellishments, and distortions which had previously interfered with this result. According to our explanation in the first chapter, this class of work falls under the *second* division of theology, understood in its organic connections. That much more might have been done under this head is of course true, and would still be true even if much more had been done. It will not be denied, however, that the contributions thus made were in the highest degree helpful. But we are led now to consider how far the historical theology of this period satisfied another requirement which in our view—as already stated—is not less essential, viz., the possibility of effecting a transition from history to dogma—or, in other words, from the second to the third stage of theological development.

Many of the contributions of eminent scholars which are now available for the purpose of determining the relation of the Bible to its later doctrinal developments, were thirty years ago non-existent. More especially this was so as regards the best of the now current expositions of the Pauline theology. Yet some productions throwing light on this question—and those not the least remarkable—had already appeared at that time—as, *e.g.*, Martensen's *Christian Dogmatics*, Ritschl's *Old Catholic Church*, Reuss's *History of Christian Theology*. And everywhere on the Continent, in theological circles, great interest was then and has since been displayed in this question. In England, on the other hand, there was considerable disinclination to engage in any such discussions, and a corresponding predilection for a purely Biblical theology, or for "the Bible without dogma," as it was called. It is a great pity that this cry should have been then raised, still more so that it should have been taken up by the leaders of Liberalism in the Church of England, and that these latter should have endeavoured to make a clean sweep of the

"after-thoughts of theology" instead of setting themselves to explain the inevitable expansion of Biblical ideas into the forms which they assumed in the post-apostolic age. Possibly the damaging association of the "development of Christian doctrine" with Romanism in the person of its author (though the development theory is not in the least necessarily connected with any such tendency) may have exercised a discouraging effect on the rising generation of English theologians. Possibly likewise the subject may have been rendered not less distasteful, in a wholly different way, by the radicalism of F. C. Baur, whose speculations were then much better known in England than they are now. But whatever may have been the cause of this neglect on the part of Liberal theologians in England, the fact itself is greatly to be regretted. For if this subject had been then investigated on the Church side, and had been continuously handled by successive theologians down to the present time, it cannot be doubted that a most healthy and beneficial effect would thus have been produced on the public mind. We should not then have had those shocks occasioned to popular orthodoxy which result as often as Christian doctrines and institutions are traced back to the antagonisms of rival parties in the early Church, or to the influence of Greek Philosophy, or to the organisation of the Roman Empire.

The influence of these Liberal theologians, though considerable whilst it lasted, was not of long continuance. This was not on account of the defect above indicated; for this defect could not have been perceived except in the light of later, and indeed still recent, experience. The decline was due rather to the gathering strength of the Anglican Church system which required that Scripture should be interpreted more in accordance with its own ecclesiastical principles. We shall now therefore consider how far the ecclesiastical interpretation of Scripture was successful

in establishing a connection between historical and dogmatic theology, this being the problem which necessarily came to the front so soon as the importance of the historical view had been vindicated after the manner above described.

II. The attempt thus initiated took the form of an insistence, partly on the general necessity of approaching Scripture from a more objective standpoint, partly on what the chief exponent of this view calls <sup>1</sup> "The great 'Church' truth of God's Word," as supplying the objective basis required. Considering the high estimation in which this principle is now held both by clergy and laity of the current Anglican type, it is wonderful that the body of divinity by which it is represented should not have been both more in quantity and better in quality. In truth, with the exception of the writer and commentator above referred to, and at most some two or three others, there has been no theologian in the Church of England whose interpretation of Scripture on these lines has been of at all a noticeable kind. Whatever may be thought of the view itself, it is a matter for just complaint—especially having regard to the popularity it has obtained—that its exposition should have been so much neglected. The result of this neglect is that the Anglican clergy—the great majority of whom are predisposed in favour of this view—are very ill-informed as to what is involved in it. Hence arises the deplorable and constantly spreading habit, of crediting passages of Scripture with teaching on Church matters and illustration of Church principles, which were as little dreamt of by the sacred writers as by their commentators in all subsequent ages. It is always a misfortune if opinions which are held by large numbers of persons are not adequately set forth by some competent authority, and this is so quite irrespectively of the merits or demerits of the opinions themselves.

<sup>1</sup> Sadler, *i.c.*

But apart from these merely practical considerations, an ecclesiastical exposition of the New Testament was much to be desired on its own account. Nor is it intended to suggest that even such attempts as were actually made in this direction by English Churchmen were not, as far as they went, meritorious. Indeed, this side of the teaching of Christ and His Apostles had been so much neglected, that even its misinterpretation and misapplication for Anglican purposes served a good end by keeping it in view. Let it be remembered that we are speaking now of the necessity of bearing the conception of the Church in mind under its Biblical aspect and in order to a right understanding of the Bible. Under other aspects this necessity may likewise be recognised, but here we are not concerned with them. Now, no explanation of the New Testament Scriptures is complete, unless it postulates the formation of a Society or Church as the ultimate aim both of Christ and His Apostles, and as the beginning and end of the gospel history. Nor can it fairly be doubted that in some parts of the gospels—as, *e.g.*, in the central chapters of St. Mark's Gospel—special attention is called to the intercourse of Christ with His disciples and to the education which they received from Him, in order that they might be the means of spreading his influence over the Christian brotherhood.<sup>1</sup> Nor, lastly, will it be denied, that the apostolic writings of the New Testament are dominated by this same idea of a kingdom or Church, and that some of the most characteristic conceptions contained in them acquire a new significance when understood in this light.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “ἵνα ὅσι μετ' αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἵνα ἀποστείλῃ αὐτοὺς κηρύσσειν.”—(St. Mark iii. 14.)

<sup>2</sup> As, *e.g.*, the doctrine of election, explained by Sadler (in the passage of his *Commentary on the Romans*, already referred to) with reference to the choice of the Church in the first instance rather than of individual Christians.

On the whole subject under discussion in this paragraph see

Though, however, as much as this may be granted, we cannot go further and say that any *use* has been made by the school of theologians in question of this conception of the Church as supplying an objective basis for the connection of the historical and dogmatic portions of the New Testament. They rightly insisted on the necessity of an objective element, and they were right also in attributing to the conception of the Church an objective character of this kind. But how under the influence of this conception the result was brought about they do not tell us. We learn from them nothing as to the welding together into a compact unity of the diverse and antagonistic forces at work in the Roman Empire during the first two centuries. For all the notice they take of the development of Christian doctrine, this latter might have been totally unconcerned with the strange medley of ideas—mystical, magical, philosophical, political—circulating on the shores of the Mediterranean, and associated together by no common bond until this was at length introduced by the assimilative energy of the Christian Church. These theologians, in short, have no historical sense, and, failing in this respect, they fail also to perceive the true marks of the divine origin of Christianity, and of the indwelling of the Divine Spirit. Instead of endeavouring after a realisation of the Christian Church as thus conceived, their whole purpose centres in the discovery of merely external and mechanical correspondences—in respect of doctrine, discipline, and ritual—between the primitive Church and the Churches of modern times, or, where no such correspondence exists, in the attempt to re-establish it. As regards their method of dealing with Scripture, it does not in kind materially differ from that of Bull and Pearson, but is immeasurably less satisfactory. For in the first place, those theologians had not the second volume of Ritschl's great classic, *Die Christliche Lehre der Versöhnung und Rechtfertigung*, from which the chief points emphasised above are derived.



advantage of living in an age of historical criticism. And secondly, they only employed this method in defence of the great mysteries of the Christian faith ; whereas this method is employed now, in order to give support to the latest new fashions in religion of the nineteenth century. In this respect no books that have appeared in our times are better fitted to serve as a counteractive than those which we shall proceed to discuss next.

III. We come now to treat of a school of Biblical interpretation which is one of the chief glories of the Church of England, not only in its recent history but throughout its whole course. It need hardly be said that this eulogistic description is intended to refer to what may be most appropriately and conveniently designated as the *Cambridge* school, and specially to the writings and commentaries of its two most eminent scholars—the late and the present Bishop of Durham.<sup>1</sup>

The first thing which strikes us in the present connection is that this school, apart from its more distinctive merits, combines in itself the characteristic excellences of the schools already described. For these Cambridge critics—at all events the best of them—are as free from bias and partisanship as was Alford. If they have not the same keen sense of the solidarity of human life as giving reality to the Biblical narrative in relation to our own times, which we find in Stanley, Jowett, and the author of *Ecce Homo*, their appreciativeness of the Bible is scarcely less many-sided, whilst their knowledge rests on far firmer foundations. Lastly, if they do not insist so much on the *fact* of the corporate or “Church” spirit pervading the New Testament as is done by theologians more ecclesiastically minded, they make far more use of this fact,<sup>2</sup> and at the same time are entirely guiltless of

<sup>1</sup> This school has, however, now extended far beyond Cambridge, and is by no one better represented at the present time than by the Ireland Professor of Exegesis at Oxford.

<sup>2</sup> Cf., e.g., Westcott's essay on “The Two Empires—the

its perversion for Church purposes after the manner which is now unfortunately so common.<sup>1</sup>

But we have here to do with the Cambridge school only under one special aspect, and it is for this reason that the above appreciation of its general merits has been judged necessary. For though the unique distinction of this school is such that it does not need to be heightened by any praise, much less by that of the present writer, there is yet something unsatisfactory in the attempt to estimate the value merely of a part of the work done by an eminent body of scholars, without an accompanying recognition of the value of their *whole* work. This is so, especially in the case before us, for the reason that the historico-theological problem with which alone in this place we are concerned, does not appear to us to have been more than very partially solved by these Cambridge divines, however much it may have been relieved by them of many of its difficulties. Hence, our judgment as regards their contributions under this head being a qualified one, might, if this were not guarded against, produce the impression that our judgment upon their whole work was similarly qualified.

On the other hand, it cannot fairly be held to be an arbitrary method of procedure that the productions, at all events of Lightfoot and Westcott, should be considered in connection with this problem. For the writings of St. Paul and St. John, taken together, furnish the key to its solution, and it is with these writings (not to speak of others scarcely less important in their bearing on the same problem) that the two theologians in question are respectively identified.

Let us then take an example illustrative of Lightfoot's manner of dealing with this problem. For this purpose, we shall examine into his conception

Church and the World," in his edition of *St. John's Epistles*, p. 249.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Lightfoot, "The Christian Ministry," *Commentary on the Philippians*, pp. 181-269.

of Pauline doctrine as regards its relationship to the *first* of what he so admirably distinguishes as "the three most important types of dogmatic and systematised religion (whether within or outside the pale of Christendom)" viz. :— (1) "Judaism and Judaic Christianity, (2) Heathen" (*i.e.*, Western) "Philosophy, and (3) Gnosis."

Now, with regard to the first of these "confronting systems" (the only one which our space admits of our considering), Lightfoot's aim is to vindicate, in opposition to the Tübingen School, the essential equality, as regards the importance assigned to them in the New Testament, of the Judaic and Pauline elements of the Gospel. "If," he says, "the primitive Gospel was—as some have represented it—merely one of many phases of Judaism, if those cherished beliefs which have been the life and light of many generations, were after-thoughts, progressive accretions, having no foundation in the person and teaching of Christ, then, indeed, St. Paul's preaching was vain, and our faith is vain also."

In order to refute any such idea, he endeavours to prove, and more or less does prove, that the Jewish and Gentile Gospels co-exist and supplement each other, and that, not only in the Acts of the Apostles, but also in those writings of the New Testament whose genuineness is undisputed, viz., the Galatians, 1st and 2nd Corinthians, and the Romans; the evidence thus furnished being borne out by that of the Apocalypse of St. John, 1st Epistle of St. Peter, &c. He further insists that the relations of St. Paul with the older Apostles were really friendly, at all events that such differences as arose between the two sides do not constitute the setting up of two rival and opposed factions, being due merely to divergences of opinion as regards practical issues, as likewise to human weakness—especially on the part of St. Peter—and to St. Paul's own missionary fervour. There

<sup>1</sup> *Introduction to the Galatians*, p. xi.

was, he admits, intense bitterness and hatred between the Judaisers and their opponents, but not between St. Paul and the Twelve—the implication, of course, being that St. Paul's statement of doctrine was unaffected by any disturbing influences of this kind, and that in this respect the teaching of his admittedly genuine Epistles is the same as that of the whole of the rest of the New Testament.

These conclusions are in close dependence on Lightfoot's exegesis of the Epistle to the Galatians, and are likewise considered in their connection with such evidence on the subject as is afforded by early Christian literature. The effect of the whole demonstration, when its different parts are thus taken duly into consideration and massed together, is almost irresistible—more especially as against the counter explanation of the Tübingen School, which, however, in the above-quoted passage from his introduction to the Epistle, Lightfoot states in its most extreme form. Nor can we be too thankful for Lightfoot's well-justified protest against trying to read between the lines of the Epistle, as, *e.g.*, when he says (p. 373), "A habit of suspicious interpretation, which neglects plain facts and dwells on doubtful allusions, is as unhealthy in theological criticism as in social life, and not more conducive to truth."

But after all, the question arises as to what sort of view is thus obtained of Pauline doctrine in its relations with its environment. Must we, because the Tübingen account of the genesis of that doctrine (whether as due to a conflict or to a compromise between two rival parties) has in the main broken down, refuse to believe in the reality of *any* influence of this kind as affecting the result? Again, can it be maintained, even on the evidence of the four undisputed Epistles, that St. Paul's differences from the original Apostles did not go further than Lightfoot is disposed to admit? Who can read, in the Greek, 2d Corinthians, ch. x., and not find in the opposition between

spirituality and carnality traces of a deeper antagonism than on Lightfoot's principles can be explained? And is not Lightfoot himself sometimes over-ingenious in his explanations, as, *e.g.*, when he writes with regard to "τῶν ὑπερλίαν ἀποστόλων." (2nd Cor xi. 5, xii. 11.) "There is in the original a slight touch of irony which disappears in the translation; but the irony loses its point unless the exclusive preference of the elder Apostles is regarded as an exaggeration of substantial claims"—or, as when he thus interprets 1st Corinthians iii. 4. "For while one saith, I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos: are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos?" as follows—"Apollos was so closely connected with him that he could use his name without fear of misapprehension. But in speaking of Cephas, he had to observe more caution: certain persons persisted in regarding St. Peter as the head of a rival party, and therefore he is careful to avoid any seeming depreciation of his brother Apostle." The effect of Lightfoot's masterly analysis is indeed only further to convince us of the impossibility of explaining the genesis of Christian dogma except on the assumption of a certain amount of real and not merely superficial opposition between St. Paul and the Twelve, and more generally, of a radical opposition between Jewish and Gentile Christianity as in *part* determining the doctrinal contents of the New Testament.

In this, as in other instances, Lightfoot is too controversial, too exclusively devoted to the aim of defeating his opponents for the time being. Thus, he might have taken advantage of the fact (to which he himself refers, see p. 347, note) that the representatives of the Tübingen School in our own days, with Hilgenfeld at their head, have modified many of their conclusions, to be more accommodating towards them, and to point out the element of truth which those conclusions undoubtedly contain. Another thing which personally we regret in Lightfoot is his almost entire

neglect of, and probably contempt for, what is known as the psychological method of explanation as applied to Pauline doctrine. It is a method which is—it may be admitted—liable to great abuse, but one critic, at any rate, Professor Otto Pfeiderer, has shown us how it may be employed with caution and discrimination.

But whatever may have been the cause, there is in the result—as it seems to us—far too much jealousy as regards “origins,” far too little admission of a give-and-take between Christianity and the surrounding world, and a consequent failure to appreciate the extent of the obligations of Christian doctrine to non-Christian influences. The existence of such obligations is no more derogatory to the divine character of Christian doctrine than it is to the divine character of Christ. In neither case, we may be sure, was the relationship such as Lightfoot’s method, with its resolutely guarded statements, its points balanced against each other, its free admissions and yet not less weighty qualifications, would lead us to suppose. The Church of those first days was much freer and more malleable in its contact with outsiders than is represented by the “thus far and no further” of even the greatest of English theological critics. But this is saying no more than that the Church then was animated by the Spirit and influence of Christ to an extent which has been unexampled since. And indeed until within recent times the person and character of Christ were in like manner kept too much aloof from their historical surroundings and too little humanised with reference to mankind at large.

As we have seen, however, a great deal has been done in the present generation towards effecting an improvement in this latter respect, so much so that the theological problem which now most needs attention is not this one, but rather that other problem on which in the present connection we have been insisting. And yet the first problem—if we may say so—waits for its full solution on the adequate treatment

of the second. For the bright rays which went forth from Christ will never be seen in their clearness until it is shown how the world, which was lighted and warmed by them, reflected back its sympathy. The contributions of Lightfoot towards this result are of immense value. This is so especially as regards the massiveness of the knowledge he has brought to bear upon the whole question, not less than as regards the skill which he has exhibited in connection with special points. Nor is his criticism by any means always subject to those limitations above mentioned which he has imposed on himself; often he shakes himself loose from them.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, we cannot say that the discussion of the problem has yet been placed on its right footing, still less that the problem itself has been solved.

Westcott's view of the relation of Christian doctrine in its origin to contemporary influences is very similar. We may perhaps say, however, that he is more inclined by character, though not more by intellect (if indeed this distinction can be maintained), to liberality and breadth of view than is Lightfoot. Indeed it would be the height of injustice and absurdity to accuse the author of *The Gospel of the Resurrection* and of *Christus Consummator*, of anything even approaching to narrowness. But the whole object of this criticism will have been misunderstood if it is supposed to be its intention to urge this accusation against either of these two equally distinguished men. Rather, their non-liability to this reproach is taken for granted, and is made the basis of proportionately high expectations as regards their treatment of the subject now under discussion.

<sup>1</sup> Where Lightfoot does not feel himself in opposition to any particular school of criticism—as in the *Commentary on the Philippians*—he is seen ethically, though perhaps not as a theological critic, at much greater advantage. The essay on “St. Paul and Seneca” in that Commentary is a very noble one and leaves little to be desired (cf. p. 292), and the notes are full of suggestive moral teaching. See on chap. i. 27, 28; chap. ii. 12, 13; iii. 2 and 3; iv. 1, &c.

Let us, however, now proceed to give some examples of Westcott's mode of treatment.

Now, if we confine ourselves to his *Commentary on St. John's Gospel*, we find that in respect of at least two lines of investigation, Westcott has contributed perhaps more than any other commentator, though many others have worked on the same lines, and have arrived at like results.

(a) No one, for instance, has been more successful in exhibiting the Jewish substratum of the fourth Gospel, or in illustrating the extent to which that Gospel is throughout leavened by Jewish associations. This is on a par with Lightfoot's similar demonstration with regard to St. Paul's Epistles, though it must be said that the points made by Westcott, if not the more conclusive, are by far the more original and suggestive.

(β) Westcott's next most original contribution to the interpretation of the fourth Gospel is his account of its plan, arrangement, and development. That it was written for a special purpose, that it takes an artistic form in respect of the presentation of its subject, that its characters are types, that it is full of "symbolism": all this Westcott not only admits, but emphasises. Such teaching is not indeed in itself particularly original, but it is so as proceeding from orthodox theologians like Westcott and Godet, for it has usually been made the basis of attempts to represent this Gospel as of non-Johannine origin, and as a mere dramatisation of history.

How then do these two chief characteristics of Westcott's method affect his exposition of the fourth Gospel?

This question requires to be considered in relation both to the metaphysical and to the historical aspects of that Gospel.

As regards the former, or metaphysical aspect of the fourth Gospel, Westcott assigns to it a secondary position in comparison with that which it occupied in



the last generation. This, in fact, has been the tendency of recent criticism, whether orthodox or otherwise. "An impartial study of the Johannine theology," says the ultra-impartial Reuss, "must always lead to the conclusion that its metaphysical side is not the author's aim, but is rather made use of as a support to his mysticism, which latter is his only fully developed purpose, and that to which he consistently adheres. On the other hand, the metaphysical passages are at every point interrupted by popular discourses repugnant to them. Hence, there is entire justification for regarding this metaphysic as not strictly the author's own, but as derived by him from some other source."<sup>1</sup>

What then, according to Westcott, was this other source?

Westcott maintains that the doctrine of the Logos (which of course is the metaphysical reference in question) was the result of "three lines of preparatory revelation" in the Old Testament. On the other hand, "the apostolic writers borrowed from him (Philo, *i.e.*) either directly or indirectly forms of language which they adapted to the essentially new announcement of an Incarnate Son of God. So it was that the treasures of Greece were made contributory to the full unfolding of the Gospel. But the essence is not his," etc.

This is that same jealousy of which we have spoken, and which we regard as a limitation.

The age in which this Gospel was written—no matter what may be its date—was an age, perhaps beyond all others in the world's history, of fusion and combination. In spite, therefore, of Westcott, and many other scarcely less eminent authorities, it can-

<sup>1</sup> *Geschichte der heiligen Schriften des Neuen Testaments*. S. 214 der 3. Aufl.

With regard to the doctrine of the Logos, the real question is, not as to its origin, but as to the application made of it by the evangelist. This latter was very little metaphysical, but rather mystical and devotional.

not but appear as uncritical to say that the doctrine of the Logos was the product of one class of influences and no more ; whilst with regard to the distinction between the matter and the form of this doctrine, the difficulty of determining where the one ends and the other begins seems to be too great to admit in the present case of this mode of explanation, which in all cases is a most slippery and dangerous one to employ.<sup>1</sup>

But a far more important point is that touching the historical element of the fourth Gospel. Now, there is nothing necessarily incompatible between Westcott's theory of the authorship of the Gospel and his theory of its character as an artistic, literary, and even dramatic, production. But it does not seem that justice is done to this theory in the application which is made of it in the following passage. "The feeling of characteristic life in the fourth Gospel is practically decisive as to its apostolic authorship. Those who are familiar with the Christian literature of the second century will know how inconceivable it is that any Christian teacher could have imagined or presented—as the author of the fourth Gospel has done—the generation in which the Lord moved, the hopes, the passions, the rivalries, the opinions by which His (*i.e.*, the Lord's) contemporaries were swayed, had passed away, or become embodied in new shapes." It is not that this contention is not capable of being maintained so far as regards its negative conclusion, but rather that it is objectionable in so far as it suggests the idea that the character and grouping of the historical data of the fourth Gospel are independent of associations engendered by a non-Jewish environment. Surely, the characteristics by which this Gospel is marked are, in respect of the complexion given to the narrative, to be ascribed to the evangelist's subsequent experiences as well as to his previous Jewish experiences. A

<sup>1</sup> It is to be regretted that Mr. Gore should have made use of this same untrustworthy distinction.—(*Bampton Lectures*, p. 101.)

mere vivid realisation of these latter certainly cannot be considered as sufficient to account for the peculiar product in question. Nor could the evangelist have dramatised the facts merely as the result of his own recollection of them, and in default of the suggestive impressions of later history. At all events, if Westcott is right in holding that the evangelist wrote with a special aim, and followed a tendency of his own in the selection of his materials, it is but going a step further to say that this tendency must have been derived from contemporary influences of speculation, and that these latter are therefore essential considerations in determining the theological character of the fourth Gospel.<sup>1</sup>

Neither in this criticism, any more than in that on the commentaries of Bishop Lightfoot, has the writer's aim been a controversial one. If it had been so, he would indeed have been engaged in an *impar congressus Achillei* of the most absurd kind. All that he has attempted to do has been, to state and explain what seem to him necessary requirements of any and every exposition of the fourth Gospel; to express his belief that these requirements have not been fully satisfied by English theologians—as represented by their foremost champion—and to emphasise the importance of a modification, in this respect, more especially with reference to the historico-theological problem above formulated.

<sup>1</sup> It is brought out very remarkably in Reuss's *Histoire de la Théologie Chrétienne* (Vol. II., pp. 479-487) how the abstract-mystical (rather than metaphysical) expressions, which are so characteristic of the fourth Gospel—*viz.*, such as *Φῶς*—*Ζωή*—*Ἀγάπη*—may be shown to have exact historical equivalents corresponding with them, *e.g.*

*Φῶς* . . . . . διδάσκαλος, xiii., 13.

*διδαχή*, vii., 16.

*Ζωή* . . . . . ἀποθάνη, xii., 24.

*τιθέναι τὴν ψυχὴν*, x., 15. etc., etc.

*Ἀγάπη* . . . . . ὑπόδειγμα, xiii., 15.

Now this double-sided aspect of the fourth Gospel is the feature intended to be referred to above as combining two different classes of experience.

## CHAPTER III

### GOD AND NATURE

THAT increased study of the Bible—the nature and extent of which formed the subject of the previous chapter—owed its origin to a combination of the new learning with the tendencies either of Church parties or of schools of thought at the Universities. It was thus not in itself a popular movement, though it might and did leaven with its influence the tone of popular religious literature. The non-popular character, however, attaching to these Biblical investigations, was due not merely to the extent of the attainments which they require on the part of those who make use of them, but also to the fact that they are from their very nature concerned more with details than with general principles. A science which confines itself to special points of criticism is not nearly so capable of attracting notice and arousing enthusiasm as one which deals in large and high-sounding abstractions, even though these latter are not more understood than are the niceties of scholarship. It was for this reason that the generalisations of physical science—more especially in their relations with religion—made such an impression on the semi-educated public during the latter part of the period here referred to. The very fact that they *were* generalisations was suffi-

cient to obtain for them, if not a deep, at all events a widespread influence.

The nature of the influence thus exerted has been already sufficiently enlarged upon so far as regards its effects on the general public. It is only referred to again here, in order to take note of the apologetic obligations which it imposed, or was thought to impose, on theologians. These latter suddenly found their contemporaries absorbingly interested in a wholly new class of questions. It not unnaturally seemed to them, under these circumstances, that the demand for a Christian treatment of these questions, and for a defence of the faith against the attacks of men of science, was of imperative urgency. But the theologians who undertook this task were for the most part very ill-qualified for it. Not only had they had no scientific training, but—what was far more serious—they were unfamiliar with scientific ways of thinking. The result was, the multiplication of a class of productions not only worthless in themselves, but far inferior to what the authors of them could have achieved, if they had been employed in some other direction. Seldom indeed have any apologetic efforts been less calculated to serve the purpose for which they were intended, or brought less credit to their promoters.

At the same time, there is an appreciable amount of progress to be recorded as regards the treatment of this class of questions by the *leaders* of religious thought in the Church of England. Of this progress we propose now to indicate some of the chief features.

The subject of our remarks is that which it has been attempted to convey under the title prefixed to this chapter, viz., God and Nature. According to the explanation given in the first chapter, it will be understood that we are thus taken back to the *earliest* stage in the development of the theological process, that, namely, which consists in the determination of the

nature of God. It is, however, only with that part of this determination which concerns God in His relation to Nature that we have here to do. For the period of theological history now under review was not at all inclined—was indeed profoundly disinclined—to investigate the *essential* nature of the Deity. In proof of this assertion, if at least it requires proof, it may be sufficient to mention that little, if any, new light was attempted to be thrown during this period on such much debated and often renewed subjects of theological interest as those of God's existence (with its proofs), His Personality, the Divine free will, etc. On the other hand, the connection of God with natural law, and with the phenomena of natural life, was the characteristic topic of discussion throughout the whole of this period, and has since continued so. It is true that the questions thus raised were often only older ones in a new shape. But even in such cases, it was necessary that the *form* of the questions discussed should take its colouring from the associations of physical science, whilst where the novelty was not merely nominal but real, this necessity was by so much the more increased.

The progress then which has been already predicated of this period in respect of the investigations referred to, will here be represented as twofold, viz. :

1. Science recognised.
2. Science made use of.

1. Professor Drummond, writing in the *Expositor* as regards "the contribution of Science to Christianity," describes the course of the dealings entered into between the two parties as follows: "After the first quarrel—for they began the centuries hand-in-hand—the question of Religion to Science was simply 'How dare you speak at all?' Then, as Science held to its right to speak just a little, the question became 'What new menace to our creed does your latest discovery portend?' By-and-by both became wiser and the coarser conflict ceased. Then we find Religion

suggesting a compromise and asking simply what particular adjustment to its last hypothesis Science would demand." Whatever may be thought of this as a description of the whole history of the relationship referred to, it certainly indicates not unfairly the progressive inclination of English Churchmen in recent times.

Not that even at the *beginning* of the period here in question there was amongst skilled theologians, as distinguished from Churchmen generally, any such disposition towards Science as is implied by the question, "How dare you speak at all?" It would, for instance, be a gross misrepresentation to attribute a depreciatory, not to say defiant, spirit of this kind to the teaching of that most eminent thinker in reference to this subject, J. B. Mozley. For the well-known *Bampton Lectures* on "Miracles" are certainly not *anti-scientific* either in intention or in effect. Nor, though no doubt they are characterised by a tendency, inherited from Newman, to minimise the universality of natural law, is there in them a word of disrespect to the claims of physical science within its own sphere. But though Mozley's teaching (which we regard as typical of the best English theology of his time) was not *anti-scientific*, it may with great appropriateness be spoken of as *extra-scientific*, and it is in that respect that it stands in such remarkable contrast with the teaching of later times.

Mozley is indeed not more anxious to vindicate the reality of supernaturalism than he is to assert its underivative and independent character, whether as against physical explanations on the one hand, or references to unknown laws of nature on the other. It is true that this disinclination on Mozley's part is evinced chiefly in connection with the possibility of the occurrence of the Gospel miracles, and that his treatment of the *ordinary* course of nature in its relation to God—as in his beautiful sermon on "Nature" in the *University Sermons* is far more

appreciative of the Divine immanence. But we are not concerned here with Mozley's whole position as regards this question so much as with the representative character of that tendency which finds most fitting expression in his Bampton Lectures.

That tendency consisted in the assertion of a *dualism*—the natural order on the one side, divine interpositions and interferences on the other. Whatever inherent sympathy there may be between the two classes of phenomena thus contrasted—and the existence of such sympathy is of course not denied as a possibility—there is, according to this view, no connecting link between them discoverable and determinable except the fact of their common derivation from God and the need for a reversal of the order of nature in the interests of man's redemption. It was a point of view not uncommon under other aspects amongst Mozley's contemporaries. Mansel *e.g.* found it necessary to insist on the impossibility of a rational theology in order to emphasise the claims of "Revelation," just as Mozley's aim was to lead up to the same conclusion by representing the divine agency as exerted upon a world of phenomena external to, or at least not standing in any demonstrable connection with, itself.

The extreme sensitiveness of English religious thought in subsequent years to the influences of physical science gradually produced a change, the effect of which was to bring Religion and Science nearer together. It would even be possible approximately to trace the stages of this process, if our space allowed of the attempt being made. For our present purpose, however, it will perhaps be sufficient to estimate the net result of the succeeding period by passing on to consider the view taken of the relations of Religion to Science nearly twenty years later (1865-1884) in the Bampton Lectures of Bishop Temple. The position of the two lecturers is in many respects, if not the same, at least very similar. This



is so, at all events, as regards the doctrine laid down in both sets of lectures respecting the belief in the Uniformity of Nature, as likewise respecting the dualism of the Natural and Supernatural and the "interference" with Nature which is involved in the occurrence of supernatural events.

Yet, in certain other respects, some merely of degree and implying only an extension of the same point of view, some, however, suggestive of a changed attitude in reference to the whole question, the teaching of the later Bampton Lectures differs from that of the earlier ones, and we can only explain this difference as due to the influence of physical science in the interval. Thus, with regard to the differences of degree, it was certainly as a concession to the physical view that Temple assigned such much narrower limits than did Mozley, both to the freedom of the will and to the sphere of the miraculous. Whether in either case religion is helped as against science by this reduction to a minimum of the points disputed between them, is extremely doubtful—or rather it is *not* doubtful that Aubrey Moore is right in saying with regard to the reduction in the first case,<sup>1</sup> "We gain nothing . . . by limiting the sphere of freedom to a comparatively small area. It is the story of the Sibylline books over again. We offer less and less, but we always demand the same price, viz., an exception to the law of uniformity, and an admission that a natural science of man is impossible." And with regard to the reduction in the second case:<sup>2</sup> "It helps nothing to reduce miracles to as small a number as possible, though this method is often tried." But here we are speaking only of the increasing influence of physical science on the current treatment of religion, and Temple's concessions, therefore, to meet the objections of science are illustrations in point.

It is, however, as regards the acceptance of the doctrine of evolution—not indeed in reference to

<sup>1</sup> *Science and the Faith*, p. 77.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

"first origins," but as regards subsequent modifications (this latter being the only sense in which science demands its acceptance), that the influence here referred to is most significantly illustrated by the Bampton Lectures of Bishop Temple. Having arrived at this point, there is no need to pursue further the comparison between Temple and Mozley. It was not to be expected that in the year 1865 a theologian should have come to terms with an hypothesis, which was, at that time, far from having obtained the assent of the majority even of men of science. Nor do we know what use Mozley would have made of the hypothesis even if it had been assented to by him. Probably it would have been much the same use as was made of it afterwards by Temple, though the thinker would naturally have far excelled the man of action in his mode of treatment. Our point is simply, the closer relationship which religion and science entered into during the interval between Mozley and Temple, as evidenced by their respective Bampton Lectures. We regard this fact—supposing it to be admitted—as a sign of progress, quite apart from the admissibility or otherwise of the theories growing out of it. Such theories rapidly succeed each other in the course even of only a few years, and mankind will change its mind many times over on this subject before its judgment concerning it will be of much practical value. Meanwhile, it is of essential importance that the two sets of facts should be seen in their mutual relations, instead of being separated from, and opposed to, each other. Everything, therefore, that tends towards this result is a step in the right direction.

For this reason an even more cordial recognition is due to the younger theologians of the Oxford school, whose sympathetic utterances as regards the relations of religion and science have formed not the least remarkable feature of their recent development. For example—"They" (men of science, that is) "are in

their sphere appointed fellow-workers with us, appointed teachers for us . . . even when themselves unconscious of it, they are prophets of a new knowledge, which is in the end a knowledge of God."<sup>1</sup> "It will be his (that is the Christian Apologist's) to show, not merely that the orderly method and the divine purpose do not contradict one another, but that each implies the other and is incomplete without it."<sup>2</sup> "The age is scientific as well as practical, and science knows nothing of isolated exceptions."<sup>3</sup>

These are only a few out of many passages conceived in a similar sense which the writings of the Oxford or *Lux Mundi* School contain, and which are of the essence of their teaching. And, as in the previous case, so here, the evidence of the writings of Churchmen may be regarded as illustrating the temper of their minds, quite independently of any particular application made by them of the conclusions of science for their own theological purposes.

The "even more cordial recognition" which we declared above to be the due of this school has reference not merely to its more *sympathetic*, but also to its more *independent*, treatment of science in relation to religion. Churchmen, when they adopt a conciliatory attitude as regards this question, sometimes become so servile in their submission as to be quite unable to distinguish between the claims of science and those of mere pseudo-science. Not so the school of writers here in question. Not only do they supply us with plentiful reminders, to the effect that "panic fear of new theories is as unreasonable as the attempt to base the eternal truth of religion on what may eventually prove to be a transient phase of scientific belief;"<sup>4</sup> but often they enter on most

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Talbot, *Keble College Sermons*, p. 62.

<sup>2</sup> Aubrey Moore, *Science and the Faith*, p. 105.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. J. R. Illingworth, *Expositor*, vol. iii. of third series, 161.

<sup>4</sup> Aubrey Moore, *Science and the Faith*, p. 162.

vigorous and, in the best sense aggressive, criticisms of the scientific position, or recall to us the right use of scientific terms: for example, force, matter, law of nature, etc. In short, whether we have regard to its fairness, or to its friendliness, or to its independence, the general disposition of this school towards science and scientific men is, as it seems to us, admirable.

2. But not only are we justified in asserting this more cordial recognition of science by theologians and the prevalence of a better understanding between science and religion in consequence, but there is a further advance noticeable in the shape of a theological interpretation of science and, more particularly, of the scientific theory of evolution. It is one thing to recognise a relationship ; it is another to profess to be able to explain it, and to generalise as to the unity of purpose connecting the related members. This latter, however, is the attempt which has been made by the theologians last referred to, though it is by no means of them only, or of them even chiefly, that we should have to make mention, if it were not that we are here concerned exclusively with the theology of the Church of England. This new view of science and of the evolution theory is indeed familiar under its more general aspects to most persons who are at all conversant with the history of recent philosophical speculation. Its novelty in the case before us consists, partly in its theological application, but still more in its acceptance by Anglican divines. We will now endeavour, chiefly by means of quotations taken from the works of these latter, to indicate its leading features.

The truth which it is desired to establish is to the effect that the God of Christianity is likewise the God of Evolution. For this purpose it requires to be shown that God acts in both spheres in the same manner, that in short the Divine operations are characterised throughout their whole extent by *unity* ; and secondly, that this raises a presumption—which

on nearer inspection becomes increasingly probable—that the revelation of God in Christianity, and in the supernatural life, takes up and completes the previous revelation of God in Nature, so that there is not only unity, but also development and a teleological connection, subsisting between the two spheres.

Now as regards the *unity*, we are told that “one who believes in the God of Christianity is bound to believe that creation is his work from end to end, that it is a rational work, and the work of a Being who is wholly good.” “The Christian recognising God at the beginning of the series, regards nature and the supernatural as differing in degree, but not in kind.” “The unity of God’s purpose throughout the physical and the moral world.” “It seems as if in the providence of God the mission of science was to bring home to our unmetaphysical ways of thinking the great worth of the Divine immanence in creation, which is not less essential to the Christian idea of God than to a philosophical view of nature.”

As regards continuity of development and teleological connection, the following specimens may serve to show what these writers are driving at. “The physical and the moral” are to be “represented not as two opposing spheres of which one dominates the other, but as the less perfect and the more perfect revelation of the moral nature of God, of which the lower leads on to and prepares for the higher, without the tremendous gap which Kant created.” . . . . “An indwelling Spirit which sustains and animates its (that is Nature’s) every part, and is revealed with increasing clearness as we ascend in the scale of creation.”

All this has an important bearing on the doctrine maintained by these thinkers as regards the nature of miracles. “In the deistic age,” we read, “the very existence of God was staked on His power to interrupt or override the laws of the universe. . . . Slowly

but surely that theory of the world has been undermined. The one absolutely impossible conception of God in the present day is that which represents him as an occasional visitor. . . . Darwinism appeared, and under the disguise of a foe did the work of a friend. It has conferred upon philosophy and religion an inestimable benefit by showing us that we must choose between two alternatives. Either God is everywhere present in Nature or he is nowhere." "Miracles cannot much longer be spoken of as 'interferences.' They are revelations of a higher life, the prophecies as it were of a new stage in the development of creation. They have their analogue all down the scale of Being. When the vegetable takes up and assimilates inorganic matter, we do not say that the organic interferes with the inorganic. Perhaps some day we shall know that here, too, we have stereotyped a false antithesis."

By the above quotations, the most expressive and the most representative which the author has been able to select, it is hoped that the view of science and religion which we are endeavouring to present may have been sufficiently indicated in outline. An examination of this view commensurable with its importance is precluded by the limits of our space, but the following seem to be the chief reflections which it most obviously suggests.

1. The concluding series of quotations given above may serve to remind us of one great, though subordinate, advantage possessed by this theory; that, namely, which arises from the fact that the view here set forth is in the first instance a view of God and Nature, and not in the first instance a view elaborated in order to explain the possibility of miracles. The doctrine with regard to these latter is a corollary from the general principles laid down, and not, as usually happens in similar cases, the sole or even the chief subject of interest. This in itself marks a distinct advance in method of treatment, not less on theo-

logical than on scientific grounds. No ample survey of the facts of science is possible so long as they are regarded exclusively with reference to the question of miracles, nor can any conclusions with respect to these latter be free from the suspicion of bias and prejudice, unless they are founded on a previous investigation of nature in its whole extent, and for its own sake alone.

2. Another advantage—partly derived from the previous one—which may fairly be claimed on behalf of this view of the Universe, is that it does not employ the terms “Nature” and “natural” in a sense different from that in which these terms are understood by men of science. This view is therefore not open to the objection urged with such force by Mozley against naturalising explanations of miracles, namely that such explanations cannot effect a reconciliation with science, because the possible laws (Bishop Butler’s) or the unknown laws (Babbage’s) of Nature to which they refer are not the laws of Nature known to science. According to the doctrine here in question, on the other hand, there is throughout the whole realm, alike of the natural and supernatural, the physical and the moral (both of which are regarded as distinctions merely of degree) only one law recognised, and that law holds good from first to last, “from the conflict of atoms to the body of the saint.” This law is not a new acquaintance introduced in order to account for a given set of phenomena (and therefore equally, no matter whether it is natural or supernatural, a law unknown to science), but rather a law which is declared to be one and the same law of science indifferently with regard to *all* sets of phenomena. No doubt the possibility of this inclusion of the supernatural under the law of the natural may be, and by many is, denied on other grounds. But in the case before us, it could not be denied on the ground that a different mode of action is attributed to God in the two spheres respectively.

3. But undoubtedly the chief merit of this view is its abhorrence of the old dualism and its assertion of that unity which, as Mr. Moore tells us, "the age demands at any price." Nor can it be complained, even by unfavourable critics, that this assertion is made in an extravagant fashion or in ignorance of its besetting temptations. Thus: "There was a time, long ago, when the unity of knowledge was as much a commonplace as the unity of Nature is now, and the birth of modern science marks the protest against that view. Yet the schoolmen were not wrong in their belief in the unity of knowledge; they were only wrong in allowing the truth of the unity to over-shadow and ultimately to destroy the differences which exist in knowledge." "While unity is a true and necessary category under which to bring the manifoldness of nature, we are at every step in danger of losing a truth in order that we may gain one. Difference is as real as unity." "The problem before the world is to bring together into a unity that which is now separated into a dualism without destroying the real distinction which exists between the separated parts." In these and other like passages, there is very full justice done to that differentiating process which is as much a characteristic of modern science as is its converse demonstration of the unbroken unity and order of Nature.

Having thus enumerated the advantages attaching to this view of God and Nature, it will now be our duty to state briefly the points in which it seems to fall short.

1. At the beginning of this chapter the opinion was expressed that recent religious thought in England had been much more concerned with God in reference to Nature than with God under any other aspect. This, of course, is not a *fault* of the times, but is due to one of those necessities for one-sided development without which progress would be impossible. At the same time, in respect of this whole view—as recently



set forth—we desiderate some fuller exposition than is forthcoming of the presuppositions with reference to the Divine Nature which are involved in the statements made concerning His manifested activity. It is not that the thinkers of this school were called on to set themselves right with those grosser and more anthropomorphic conceptions, according to which the personality of God exercises itself in defying the laws of Nature rather than in submitting to them as its own laws. Such fundamental misapprehensions may well be left to be dealt with by a different class of teachers from that with which we are here concerned. But there is something more required in the present case than that the nature of God should be simply postulated in that form in which it is familiar to every Christian reader, and then that a mode of behaviour and activity should be ascribed to God which, as made use of for apologetical purposes, is a novelty, not only to the Christian reader but to the general public. Something more should be done than is done to bring together and to harmonise the conception which is taken for granted and the conception which is elaborated for the first time.

Nor can these accomplished thinkers be ignorant of the difficulties which are presented by this problem, or of the fact that the belief in a personal God has by many ere now been surrendered on account of its, at all events seeming, incompatibility with the natural process of development ; whilst, on the other hand, this latter has often lost its interest in the eyes of a different class of men, by reason of there seeming to be nothing in it to justify the belief in a personal God. No doubt it may be said that those are precisely the two opposites which furnish the materials of the proposed synthesis, and that the suggested explanation is therefore one which is likely to give satisfaction to both parties. But to show in what form a reconciliation might be effected, and how complete the reconciliation would then be, is not the same thing as

to have succeeded in effecting it. Before this latter result can be arrived at, the conception of a personal God will have to be worked at with much more thoroughness, both in itself and in its relationships. That this may be—perhaps *is* being—done must be the devout prayer of every well-wisher for the future of English religious thought, as it is certainly that of the present writer.

2. A further criticism which here suggests itself with regard to this point of view has reference to the depreciatory, if not disrespectful, language which these thinkers adopt in speaking of the Kantian Dualism. That this dualism is an essential part of Kant's Philosophy, admits of course of no doubt. A study, however, of Professor Caird's last published book on Kant seems to show that the philosopher's teaching on this subject is very different from what it is popularly supposed to be, and even from what it is supposed to be by this school of thinkers. It is indeed not certain that Kant's Dualism did not lead by positive affiliation, quite as much as by provoking a reaction, to the subsequent attempts at synthesis.<sup>1</sup> Nor for these thinkers of the Oxford School could there be any better preparatory discipline to their engagement upon the subject now under discussion than a study of those parts of Kant's writings which more particularly refer to it, and especially of the "Urtheilskraft."

3. Finally, if it is not unbecoming in the present writer to say so, this apologetical application of Hegelianism is too apt to mistake a poetical and artistic handling of the forms and processes of development (often, however, degenerating into mere verbiage) for scientific proof. This was one cause of the decline of Hegelianism in Germany even before the rise of Materialism. And if the hope expressed by Mr. Matheson "that England may give back to Germany that speculative vigour which she derived from German soil," is ever to be

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Caird, *The Critical Philosophy of Kant*, vol. i., p. 269, note, vol. ii., pp. 641, 642.

realised, it will certainly not be by a display of that very weakness through which Philosophy in Germany first became discredited. Instead of this, let us hope that the preoccupation of contemporary religious thought with the teleological aspects of Physical Science may lead to some real contributions being made to the theology of the Church of England. It is a wide and ever widening field of observation, which is thus opened up. We cannot expect that the study of it will be so immediately productive of results as it would be if we were looking merely for arguments from design in the spirit of the Bridgewater Treatises. We have, however, the advantage of knowing that such results as we are able to arrive at have been "brought us" *by* Science, instead of being merely our own interpretations *of* Science. It is especially by their profiting from this advantage that the theologians whose work we have been endeavouring to estimate have deserved well, alike of Science and of the Church of England.

Thus far we have been criticising the work done in recent times by English theologians with a view to throwing light on problems connected with the consideration of God and Nature. Such speculations are valuable, from the theologian's point of view, not so much in themselves as for the possibility which they facilitate of conceiving of the God of Nature in reference to the subsequent grades of the Catholic synthesis. For the business of the theologian is with this synthesis far rather than with philosophical ideas of God considered independently. Now, the questions hitherto discussed in this chapter are such as, in the present state of opinion, necessarily give rise to controversy. Hence, though each suggested explanation of the nature of the divine activity involves a positive conception of God as its counterpart, this latter is very liable to be lost sight of in the cloud of argument by which it is overlaid. We are therefore led to inquire

whether there is no help to be derived from looking in any other direction for a *præparatio evangelica* in the shape of teaching about God antecedent to the teaching of the Christian Revelation. Or rather, as it is with recent theology that we are here concerned, the question arises, what has been done by our latter-day theologians, otherwise than by attempts to reconcile religion and science, to show that God, as conceived of apart from Christianity and on an independent basis, harmonises, or at all events is not inconsistent, with the Christian idea of God?

The class of investigations brought under our notice by the statement of this question is that which is concerned with the science of Man as distinct from the science of Nature. As, however, it is in exclusive connection with the presentation of the idea of God that these anthropological studies are here to be referred to, the question comes to be as to the relationship of non-Christian ideas of God to the God of the Christian religion. Let us then now proceed to consider what (if any) contributions have recently been made by theologians of the Church of England to the determination of this question.

The light thrown on Christianity by non-Christian religions is a subject which of late years has excited an immense amount of interest both within and outside of the Church of England. This subject is sometimes discussed in a spirit of hostility to orthodox beliefs, sometimes with a view to liberalising these latter, sometimes, on the other hand, in order to exhibit the superiority of Christianity. This last attempt again takes different forms, some more, some less, appreciative of the religions which are regarded as having failed. The course of religious thought in the Church of England has shown a very similar tendency with reference to this question to that which we have indicated above as having been followed with reference to Physical Science. There was, however, never anything like the same danger apprehended from thi

quarter by even the most timid Churchmen, nor had theologians anything like the same difficulty in coming to terms with the problems thus presented to them.

On these last grounds, it is not worth while now to go back to a time—which everyone who has passed his fortieth year must remember, if only as a survival—when the mere attempt to institute comparisons between Christianity and the other religions of the world was looked upon with suspicion. It is more to the purpose to distinguish the *subsequent* tendencies of religious thought in the Church of England with regard to non-Christian ideas of God.

Now, the important point of distinction is not so much the more or less sympathetic attitude adopted by theologians in different cases, as rather the recognition, or non-recognition, of an *organic* relationship between the Christian idea and other antecedent ideas of God. Not much value attaches to attempts to compare religions with each other, merely in the way of likeness or difference. We are all familiar with such comparisons. We know how the religions unfavourably contrasted with the “one” religion, are yet, up to a certain point and subject to the limitations under which they are shown to labour, eulogised and extolled. Nor are we less accustomed to those other criticisms, the intention of which is to minimise the unique excellence of the “one” religion by exhibiting its derivative character from its supposed inferiors. Both classes of criticism, in the course of their respective demonstrations, suggest points of interest, and are besides useful as helping to popularise the results of learned research. But neither of them is criticism of a high kind, nor is either of them criticism such as we have a right nowadays to expect. No treatment of the subject can possess this latter character if its only aim is to determine the question of superiority as between the religions compared. It is not merely that an inquiry undertaken in this spirit cannot be really impartial,

but it is impossible to see any subject in its all-round connections, if the point of view from which it is regarded is thus limited.

On the other hand, investigations pursued in this direction are not any more religious than they are scientific. Religions cannot be arranged relatively to each other on principles of competition without its being implied by this very fact that there is something which they share in common and in respect of the possession of which, to a greater or to a less extent, their relative positions are assigned to them. Now, this likeness between religions cannot be less important than the differences between them. It would indeed be truer to speak of there being only one religion developed under different forms, than it would be to speak of there being many different forms of religion one of which was "the *one*" religion as compared with all the rest.

But in order for the different religions of the world thus to "come by their rights" and to be recognised as the sharers in a common inheritance, they must be shown to be the manifestations of a single principle, the outcome of a unity. The Church of England, however, though for many years past its attitude on this question has been in the main a liberal one, does not seem to any great extent to have advanced in this direction. The obligations of Christianity to other religions on account of its adoption from them of usages, forms, ceremonies, modes of dress and service, as likewise of such conceptions as those of sacrifice, inspiration, and judgment, have no doubt been freely recognised. But to arrive at a deeper principle underlying the whole connection between the religions of the world, Christianity included, does not seem to be a task which has been often entered on, at all events not by theologians of the Church of England.

Yet in recent years a somewhat different note has been sounded, and a more philosophical position has been taken up, by some of the foremost thinkers in our

Church with reference to this question. As the tendency is one which is by no means identified with any one school of thinkers but emanates from the most different and even (as some would think) opposite quarters, it will be best to quote examples taken from the works of writers whose ways of thinking in other respects have not much in common. Dr. Abbott (*Through Nature to Christ*, pp. 94, 95) writes as follows. "What other people call evolution or the spirit of progress, or chance, or nothing, or the unknowable, that I call the Word of God. This Word of God I discern in the old days of Rome and Greece, and the still older days of Israel and of Egypt, and going back still further, I discern it in the very dawn of human thought, leading men towards love and trust and awe, or, in other words, shaping the souls of men for worship with the same spiritual tools which were employed with supreme effect by Jesus of Nazareth. . . . But this we shall not be able to realise, unless we first realise the manner in which, for ages before the coming of Christ, the Word of God, acting through human and non-human nature, led men by illusions towards love and trust and awe, and so prepared the way for the Incarnate Word."

In a very similar sense the Rev. J. R. Illingworth thus expresses himself. (Keble College Sermons, p. 319. Sermon on "Life.") "It is for this reason that Christian philosophy can see more than poetic fiction in the early creeds that peopled the world with personalities and powers, full of mysterious sympathy and kinship with the joys and sorrows of the sons of men—more than a logical abstraction in that yearning wistful Pantheism to which men clung amid the miserable dying days of Greece and Rome." And again (*Expositor*, III. series, vol. iii., p. 165). "All the forms of nature worship which we find among savage races, much more the refined Pantheism of later days, point to a truth which professing Christians are often apt to underrate."

Many other passages from different writers of different schools might be quoted to the same effect. As perhaps in the cases quoted, so also in other cases, the writers who thus express themselves may not have in view precisely the same thing in what they are attempting to convey. Neither the differences of their Christology, however, nor any of their other differences, need concern us here. For all that we here maintain is, that there must be some *essential* unity between Christianity and its precursors, if the latter are to be regarded as having this character in any real sense at all. Yet in saying that this is *all* that we maintain, we do not wish that it should seem to be implied that this all is not much. For be it observed that our meaning is, not merely that the antecedent religions were of the nature of an *education* or *preparation* for the subsequent Christianity, but rather that they contained *implicitly* what Christianity afterwards revealed to be not only its own nature, but also theirs.

We regard, then, this tendency of religious thought as having the true "note" of Catholicity, as one link amongst many others between Christian theology at this its first stage and Christian theology in its subsequent stages, as in short, a most hopeful sign of the times and one from which more is sure to follow.

It should be stated before we conclude this chapter, that the idea of God as conceived in the Old Testament would require to be considered in this connection, if it were not that the *literature* of the Old Testament rather than its *theology* had been the main preoccupation of Old Testament students in recent times. The distinguished literary and linguistic services, however, which have been rendered in this department, encourage the hope that the theology of the Old Testament may be not less ably and successfully dealt with in the next generation, if not in the immediate future.



## CHAPTER IV

### DOGMATIC THEOLOGY

IF we look only to its quantity, the chief part of the dogmatic theology of the Church of England in recent years has been concerned with the attacks made on the orthodox position by anti-dogmatic opponents. These attacks were in substance an attempt to invalidate the authority of the Church's creed, which latter was represented not only as untenable in itself, but as of non-Biblical origin, and as due to the speculative and ecclesiastical tendencies of post-apostolic times. Now, no one can be, even superficially, acquainted with recent apologetic literature, without being aware of the many and often ably-conducted arguments which have been brought forward on the Church side, in support both of the intrinsic reasonableness and credibility of the articles impugned, as likewise of their primitive origin.

Nevertheless, we trust we shall be doing no injustice to these apologetic demonstrations, if we do not regard them as forming the most characteristic and significant portion of the subject with which it is proposed to deal in this chapter. The fact is, that they were not for the most part of a kind to do justice to the Church's cause, still less to carry weight with the Church's opponents. And this seems to have been felt by Churchmen themselves, or at all events

by those of them who were most keenly alive to the signs of the times. Such Churchmen could not help seeing that the old apologetic arguments were not sufficient, and equally it appeared to them that what was wanted was, not defensive arguments at all, but a statement of the dogmatic position in a form calculated to appeal to the intelligence of the nineteenth century.

Nor was it only or chiefly as regards the sufficiency of their *own* arguments that the higher minds in the Church were disposed to entertain doubts. They desiderated an education of Church people generally in doctrinal matters, previous to themselves undertaking, in reference to these same matters, the work of defending the Church before the world. It was, in fact, not that they flinched from their enemies, but that it seemed to them that their best chance of combating these latter successfully was by bringing their own followers more into line. Thus, though their ultimate object was resistance to the above-mentioned attacks brought to bear upon them, their immediate object was doctrinal readjustment from within, as that without which the former result was clearly seen by them to be impossible.

In truth, there was at this time a very general feeling of dissatisfaction entertained by the leaders of different schools of thought in the Church, not only on account of the inadequacy of popular orthodoxy to cope with the difficulties presented to it, but also on account of the claim of popular orthodoxy to control the higher theology of the Church of England. Popular orthodoxy had gathered strength at the expense of intellectual orthodoxy in consequence of the Romanist secessions from the Church, and the opportunity which was thus furnished, and which was not likely to be neglected, of representing all religious thought, as distinct from mere vague sentiment, in the light of a delusion and a snare. Educated Churchmen were thus placed in a position of reaction, not

only as against the opinions of those whom they regarded as their enemies, but also as against the opinions of their own less educated friends. This curious complication has continued in existence ever since, and the editor of *Lux Mundi* in his preface speaks of popular orthodoxy in terms of depreciation almost equal to those in which he speaks of professed unbelief. The same feeling had, of course, been expressed even more strongly by the originators of the Oxford Movement. But the significance of this tendency, in the form which it has assumed since the middle of the century, lies in the fact that it has been exhibited not only by the leaders of one school or party, but more or less by the leaders of all schools and all parties in the Church of England. The interests of religious thought were at stake, and the desire to defend these interests has often served as a uniting bond between Churchmen of otherwise widely divergent views.

Now, the effects of this influence were both more felt and more apparent in that branch of theology which we have now under consideration than in any other. The subjects which we have hitherto discussed are either non-popular (Biblical criticism *i.e.*), or else only popular by reason of the alarm which their treatment is held to justify (Religion and Science, etc.). On the other hand, English public opinion has never, since the Reformation period, ceased to exercise its right to assert itself in reference to matters of dogmatic belief. The questions which these matters suggest are such as are enlarged upon in sermons, ventilated in cheap books and yet cheaper magazines, made piquant by current religious controversies. All this is, of course, in a high degree healthy and stimulating to the popular taste, besides that it tends to humanise theologians. At the same time, it has its seamy side, and it was this latter which during the period here referred to became so conspicuous as to raise the apprehensions even of theologians

popularly gifted. Hence, all the best dogmatic theology of recent times has had a double edge to it, the one of which has been turned against the foes of orthodoxy, the other against those of its friends whose "zeal is not according to knowledge." Yet the best dogmatic theology has in our times borne much more the stamp of the reformer's impress than that of the apologist pure and simple, or rather, as has been already stated, it has been intent on setting its own house in order as a first step towards safe-guarding itself against foreign invasion. Consequently we shall be concerned in this chapter with dogmatic theology chiefly as thus determined.

The creative impulse which the study of this subject received under the influences referred to was due in the first instance to the theological writings of F. D. Maurice. That double-sided aim of which we have spoken appears perhaps more clearly in the Maurician theology than in any other of recent times. And indeed this is one of many circumstances which makes the right understanding of Maurice so difficult. We always have to ask ourselves—what foe is he combating? What error, emanating from what quarter, is he endeavouring to correct? Again, the character of Maurice's theology typically illustrates the nature of the environment in which recent dogmatic thought first took shape. It was a time of national expansion on all sides; social questions were every day coming more and more to the front; great possibilities of intellectual development were being opened up which, however, were threatened with extinction by a mechanical philosophy and an irreligious materialism. Under these circumstances, the leaders of thought in the Church were inevitably called on to estimate the strength of the forces which the traditional theology had placed at their command. The mere suggestion of this question was enough to convince such men that popular orthodoxy was a broken reed to lean upon in

its then state. And it was so especially as it seemed to them in the following respects :—

(1) The current theology, to use Maurice's phrase, "takes account only of man's depravity." A one-sided insistence on this latter fact had tended to put out of sight all the disciplinary, ameliorative, and constructive influences of the Faith of Christ when realised and understood in its breadth and fulness. The consequence of this was that Christianity appeared, if not as a foe, at all events as indifferent, to the new forces of life and thought produced by the growth of modern civilisation.

(2) The current theology, to use another of Maurice's phrases, is "a theology which begins from man instead of from God." Under this description Maurice intended to refer to a tendency, which he had observed not only in the theology of his time, but which he knew to be of much more general prevalence, and against which his anti-Benthamite crusade was chiefly directed. Here, however, we have to do with the then state of opinion only under its theological aspect. But even as thus limited, this tendency takes more than one form. It includes both Rationalism in matters of religion—the attempt to bring down God to man, and to measure God's capacities by man's understanding of them—and it includes also what may be called Religious Sentimentalism—*i.e.*, the attempt to measure God by man's feelings, states of experience, spiritual susceptibilities etc.

The nature of the reconstruction which Maurice propounded with a view to giving a new direction to theology is well known. In opposition to the partial and one-sided tendencies against which he protested, it was maintained by Maurice—(1) that the conception of sin is correlative to the conception of the Kingdom of God or of Christ. Sin is not a thing by itself, but is due to a sense of loneliness or isolation from the Divine Fellowship. Thus at the same time that exclusive concentration on human depravity is avoided,

the heinousness of sin is not weakened. On the other hand, by bringing into prominence the conception of the Kingdom of God, and by representing Churches, States, and the various other bonds of union into which men enter, as a means to the realisation of this kingdom, Maurice effected a reconciliation between Christianity and its environment without detracting from, but by rather heightening, the spiritual character of the former. (2) that the Divine is the ground of the Human, and consequently that our theology must not begin from man, but reversely from the side of God and of Christ as the head of the human race. "For the sake of that general humanity—because I believe it is in danger of being utterly trampled on, or of becoming a trumpery name which has no reality answering to it—I would keep those treasures which have been entrusted to us." (Sermons, vol. ii., p. 48).

The great interest of Maurice's theology consisted in the fact that it presented a constructive view of dogma which claimed neither to neglect, nor to run counter to, the tendencies of modern thought. And as we shall see, at a later time other similarly more human views of dogma made their appearance. We call attention to Maurice's theology here, however, merely in that respect observed upon above—viz., in so far as it aimed at being a corrective of popular orthodoxy, more especially as regards the particulars instanced in the preceding paragraphs. There was, and for long had been, great need felt for a more living theology, and this need had frequently found expression, as, *e.g.*, in a letter of Clough's in which he says that "the thing which men must work at will not be critical questions about the scriptures, but philosophical problems of grace and free-will, and of redemption as an idea, not as a historical event." (Remains, vol. i., p. 3). In the succeeding time, the theologian who most nearly responded to this demand was J. B. Mozley. Mozley conceived of dogma so far after Maurice's ideal, as that it meant for him, not something

to be watered down and accommodated to human reason, but rather something to which human reason should rise, and so be invigorated.<sup>1</sup> Thus, Mozley does not attempt to *explain* such doctrines as predestination, original sin, or the atonement. This, however, being granted, his aim is, either to take us to the field of life for illustrations of a similar principle to that which he finds in the dogma (*e.g.*, in reference to the atonement, the principle is "the great principle of mediation in nature"), or else to show us how that which a dogma asserts is assumed by men without their knowing it—as, *e.g.*, in the case of original sin. The dogma in this case, he tells us, is really the basis of the criticisms of human nature which appear in modern literature of the cynical and pessimist types, and especially in modern poetry). But though Mozley makes interesting points of this kind, there is no presentation in his writings of dogma in reference to life as a whole. Nor is there any readjustment of the dogmatic point of view similar to that of F. D. Maurice.

Speaking generally, we may say that the doctrinal development of the Church at about this time was in three directions.

(1) The merely external view of dogma was the one most in favour. This was natural at a time of increased and increasing ecclesiasticism. The question was not what dogma means in reference to life, but as to whether you will believe it or else have the hands sawn off by which you are clinging to the boat and so fall back into the sea. It was an age of dilemmas between propositions, which must be believed in the Church's sense or which otherwise cannot be believed in any sense. This form of argument in order to be successful would have required the exercise of much more authority than the Church of England can

<sup>1</sup> See his sermon on "The influence of dogmatic teaching on education," included with the *University Sermons*, though preached at Lancing College.

pretend to possess. Its only effect in the present case was to make many good men despair of any progress being achieved by the Church in the future.

(2) On the other hand—possibly as a reaction against this last tendency—a great increase in the number of persons holding independent views and, though in communion with, and often ministering in, the Church of England, acting as theological free lances in regard to dogma. This work, as has been already explained, has to do only with tendencies characteristic of the Church of England as a whole. Consequently individual deviations from orthodoxy of the kind referred to cannot be noticed except in passing. It may be mentioned, however, as significant, that these new departures were strictly confined to the personal following of those who entered on them. Gifted preachers and teachers exercised a considerable influence over their disciples, but their views did not become more widely diffused. Church feeling was gaining ground and an ecclesiastical, far rather than an individualistic, theology was its outcome.

(3) An obliteration of the distinctive lines which mark off dogmatic theology from Biblical interpretation, on the one hand, and from the *ipse sensi* of subjective religion on the other. A branch of theology always shows its weakness by tending to lose its individuality. The sphere of dogmatics is not to be confounded with that which we had in view, when we treated above of the second stage of theological progression under the title of "Theology and the Bible." The two spheres are different, however closely related. "Holding to the Bible," says Martensen, "the relation of disciple does not forbid, but rather requires, that the contents of Biblical doctrine should be *reproduced* as the truths of one's own consciousness."<sup>1</sup> Yet the theology of our time constantly ignores this precept. To speak of proving a dogma out of the Bible is nonsense. There are no dogmas

<sup>1</sup> Clark's translation of Martensen, by Urwick, p. 52.



in the Bible, but there is that in the Bible with regard to which dogmas are formulated. The formula, however, is the distinctive part of every dogma, and this formula is essentially extra-Biblical. Not less frequent, and not less objectionable, is the habit of treating dogmatic theology as falling within the sphere of subjective religion. When it is said "*Hoc est Christum cognoscere, beneficia ejus cognoscere*,"<sup>1</sup> the statement thus made is, no doubt, strictly true, and we trust that we are not insensible to its importance. But such statements are often applied by popular preachers and teachers in an entirely misleading sense, and it would be easy, though by no means edifying, to quote passages from sermons and books of devotion, in which the interests of theology are prejudiced by this confusion between dogmatic belief and subjective faith.

Though, however, the Church of England was developing in these one-sided directions with regard to its conception and application of dogma, we must not suppose that the recent history of dogmatic theology—more especially its *quite* recent history—does not show signs of a progressive improvement. That welding together of the different sections of the Church, spoken of in the earlier part of this volume, was no doubt chiefly responsible for the change which took place. This change showed itself, sometimes in a delicate perception of relationships between doctrines previously unconnected or opposed, as, *e.g.*, in Westcott's: "The currents of theological speculation have led us to consider the sufferings of Christ in relation to God as a propitiation for sin, rather than in relation to man as a discipline, a consummation of humanity. The two lines of reflection may be indeed, as I believe they are, more closely connected than we have at present been brought to acknowledge,"<sup>2</sup> sometimes in a view of doctrinal misconceptions as serving

<sup>1</sup> Melancthon, as quoted by Martensen.

<sup>2</sup> *Christus Consummator*, p. 24.

to adumbrate imaginatively a higher truth, as in Mason's : "What are called forensic doctrines" (*i.e.*, in regard to the atonement) "have seemed to satisfy many hearts, but only so far as they were right metaphors, parables hinting at a fuller truth which was consciously or unconsciously felt to lie behind them,"<sup>1</sup> sometimes in warnings against "the popular travesties of Christian theology to which the insulation of a few doctrines, for homiletic purposes, and the disproportionate insistence on them, has gradually given rise."<sup>2</sup>

Yet, after all, no great importance would attach to these mere probings after a more Catholic realisation of Christian truth, if there were no traces of a more positive view in the Church of England tending in the same direction. The above quotations are indeed samples of a great many similar expressions which frequently occur in the writings of the best contemporary theologians. Such expressions do not meet with the recognition they deserve on the part of those who have hitherto been accustomed—often not without reason—to regard all dogmatic theology as the outcome of merely reactionary influences, and these expressions are here referred to for that reason, as well as because they indicate the drift of current theological tendencies. But can we go further and say that there is anything like a constructive adaptation of dogma to the facts of life to be seen emerging from the theology of the Church of England at the present time?

It seems to the present writer that, though no such view has been embodied in any adequate form, there is no lack of attempts in this direction, and that these attempts, in spite of their being mostly conveyed through the unsatisfactory vehicle of sermons, essays, and lectures, are highly significant. Let us then endeavour, as the result of our lucubrations, to state in what, as it seems to us, this more positive view of dogma consists.

<sup>1</sup> *Faith of the Gospel*, p. 172.

<sup>2</sup> Illingworth, vol. iii. of the *Expositor*, third series, p. 161.

The dogmatic conception of Christ which appears to be most characteristic of recent religious thought in the Church of England is, if we mistake not, expressed in the following terms by Bishop Westcott, in his work already referred to, *Christus Consummator*: "I believe that if we are to do our work we must learn to think, not only of the redemption of man, but also of the accomplishment of the Divine purpose for all that God made. We must learn to think of that *summing up of all things in Christ*, in the phrase of St. Paul, which crowns the last aspirations of physicist and historian with a final benediction. We must dare, in other words, to look beyond Christ the Consoler to Christ the Fulfiller. Christus Consolator—let us thank God for the revelation which leaves no trial of man unnoticed and unsoothed—leads us to Christus Consummator."<sup>1</sup>

"The accomplishment of the Divine purpose for all that God made." That is, in Christ everything realises its true mission, and attains to its true perfection. This extended conception of Christ has taken the place, in the minds of Churchmen, of that other one touched upon by Westcott, and which was the dominant one in the last generation. We do not, of course, mean that the older conception is abrogated by being thus extended. On the contrary, it is part of Westcott's purpose to show that the wider view includes the narrower, and that, far from there being any opposition between them, the one finds its completion in the other. At the same time, it is the wider view which is just now the one which is the more characteristic of our times, or, as Westcott expresses it, "the particular aspect of the Gospel which is offered by the Spirit of God to us now for our acknowledgment."

Now, the Christ as thus conceived, "accomplishes the Divine purpose for all that God made," in virtue of His Incarnation. Westcott's statement is in fact,

<sup>1</sup> *Christus Consummator*, pp. 11 and 12.

only another way of saying that the conception of the Incarnation includes all other conceptions of Christ in relation to man. And this explanation is not only Westcott's, but is also that of most other theologians of the Church of England at the present time. The writings of these latter, in fact, are usually neither more nor less than an attempt to show *how* this is so, how reasonable, *i.e.*, the subordination must appear, whether considered, *e.g.*, in relation to the historical fact of Christ's resurrection, or to the dogmatic truth of His atonement.

But the aspect of the Incarnation which is now predominant in the Church requires to be looked at on another side in order to be understood. This new element (which is, however, only an addition to Westcott's statement in the sense that it draws out more fully what Westcott implies) consists in an accentuation of that mode of regarding the Incarnation which has been thus admirably interpreted by Hegel. "The Christ says, run not hither and thither. The kingdom of God is within you. Many others were honoured as Divine messengers or as divinities. For instance, statues were erected among the Greeks to Demetrius Poliorcites as to a god, and the Roman Emperors were honoured as gods. So there have been incarnations received, as Buddha, Hercules. But the history of Christ is history for the community, and has the witness of the Spirit in the life of faith. Thus it is maintained in a spiritual way, and not by external power."<sup>1</sup> This view appears again in the following reference of an American writer<sup>2</sup> to the same subject. "St. John says, 'The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.' It was ethical and organic, and it was not ethical in a formal way, but in the realisation of personality; and it was

<sup>1</sup> Hegel, *Philosophie der Religion*, vol. ii., p. 321. Quoted by Mulford.

<sup>2</sup> Mulford's *Republic of God*, p. 126. The italics are our own.

not simply in an individual way, but *in the life that was given for man, and became the life of humanity*."

Perhaps it is in the concluding words of this last passage that the point which it is desired here to emphasise is most simply expressed. "The life that became the life of humanity." This is something like Maurice's view as above set forth, only that the idea of *immanence* is more dwelt upon. For that reason, the two passages quoted in the last paragraph appear to be more correctly applicable to the later theological school with which we are now concerned. For the distinctive attribute of this school is, that it regards the Incarnation as having become so centred in human relationships and social institutions as for these to be no longer independent, but if we may so speak, "bone of its bones and flesh of its flesh." The immanence in this case with respect to human nature is like that treated of in the last chapter with respect to non-human nature, and is, indeed, but a further development of the same essential unity. In the case of human nature, however, the idea of reciprocity is a distinguishing characteristic, which, even allowing for the possibility of reciprocity to a certain extent in regard to non-human nature also, is none the less *sui generis*. But in the case before us, this immanence of the divine and human is conceived of, more especially with reference to man under a social aspect, "the life that was given for man, and became the life of humanity." Of course, many of the theologians who take this view, inasmuch as they are High Churchmen, discourse on this immanence, chiefly, if not altogether, in connection with that part of man's social nature which falls within the domain of the visible Church. But this whole point of view is not confined to theologians of this class, nor do even High Church theologians make use of the idea of the Incarnation exclusively for ecclesiastical purposes. The point of novelty, alike as regards all classes of theologians, is that the forms under which the Divine nature is con-

ceived of as realising itself in the human, are represented as being a part of it, as its very substance, as itself.

It will now be desirable to give some illustrations of the extent to which this fundamental idea of contemporary dogmatic theology affects the determination of specific doctrines.

(1) With regard to the connection between the Christ of Dogma, and the Christ of History, the tendency of recent theology has been increasingly to dwell on the historical fact of the Resurrection as proving the truth of the doctrine of the Incarnation. But the chief feature of this insistence has not been the demonstration of Christ's Divinity as *proved* by the reality of His Resurrection, but rather the demonstration of His life-giving power as thus shown to have been made the everlasting possession of the human race. "It is not, and never was, the empty grave upon which the faith of the Apostles and the life of the Church was founded. It was the existence of the Saviour in Glory, and more than that, his actual energy and life-giving power through his Spirit, which gave the Church its foundation."<sup>1</sup> And we shall find that this idea of the Resurrection is that which is entertained by the chief exponents of the theology, and which is proclaimed from the pulpit by the leading preachers, of the Church of England at the present time.

(2) The *Trinity*. "I should wish to lay great stress on the fact that the existence of the Trinity in God becomes a truth of human experience, if the claim of our Lord to oneness with God is admitted," *i.e.*, if the man Christ is the Incarnate Son of God, then Faith in the Trinity is made easy.<sup>2</sup>

(3) The *Atonement*. "When He to whom everything pointed as the obvious mediator between God and man began and carried through to the end His

<sup>1</sup> Wace, *The Gospel and its Witnesses*.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. C. Gore, *Bampton Lectures*, p. 264, note in appendix.

historic work, his mode of operation was only this—to be Himself very God and very Man.”<sup>1</sup>

(4) *Justification*. It has been said that the difference (in respect of justification *i.e.*) between Protestantism and Romanism consists in the fact that while the former represents man as being made free from sin and so justified, the latter represents man as being made positively righteous by the possession of a *fides formata*. The Church of England has hovered between these two views, and cannot be said to be committed to either of them. Yet the most characteristic utterances of theologians of late years are in the spirit of Oxenham’s, “to justify is to make, not simply to account, men just.” Now, such a conception of justification must necessarily be viewed in the light of the Incarnation rather than in the light of the Atonement.

The Incarnation, however, as thus considered, has not most frequently been applied as a dogma to dogmas, but rather as a dogma to life. Its chief use has been to furnish a doctrinal basis for the explanation of the spiritual principles underlying the relations into which men enter with each other, whether in the Church or in the world. It has also been the doctrine most relied on as a support to the Christian view of the material universe.<sup>2</sup>

It has been said that the aspect of this doctrine now most in favour was suggested by the previous state of theology rather than by more extrinsic considerations. This, we saw, was avowedly recognised by Westcott’s statement of the theological question which he considered as now most demanding attention, in comparison with the theological question which, however important, he regarded as being for our own generation, of secondary interest. And the strictly theological origin of the more recent view of

<sup>1</sup> Mason, *The Faith of the Gospel*, p. 173.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the exposition on this subject in Chapter III.

Christ's person and work admits of illustration in many other ways.

Now this fact has resulted in much greater care being bestowed on the theological elaboration of this conception than on its presentation in such a form as to meet the objections of opponents. So far as the current doctrine of the Incarnation has been treated on this latter side, not much progress has been made, except in the way of vindicating the perfect honesty and sincerity of the theologians concerned. Attempts to define the limits within which Christ's Divinity was historically revealed are essentially rationalistic, understanding that word in its philosophical sense. Such attempts may, no doubt, be entered on without contradiction by a theologian like Ritschl, approaching the subject, as he did, from what is called a Neo-Kantian point of view. In that case, there is a *previous* theory, not only of the world and of man's place in it, but also of the place of Divinity in relation to this world and to man as a part of it. The only question which then has to be asked is: "Did the historic Christ fulfil the conditions which would require to be fulfilled in order to entitle him to be called Divine?" Thus, with Ritschl, the primary requisition of Incarnate Divinity is moral victory over the world, and this victory Ritschl has no difficulty in showing that Christ achieved.<sup>1</sup> But Ritschl is only able to arrive at this position by the ascertainment of correspondences within limits which he has himself prescribed, and his judgment therefore on Christ's Divinity is, at the end of his demonstration, only what the Germans call a "value judgment" (*werth-urtheil*). The theory is perfectly consistent with itself, whatever may be thought of it on other grounds, as to which latter the present writer is most anxious that it should not be prejudiced by this extremely cursory explanation of its meaning. But the same consistency is not apparent in the conduct of those who while dwelling on the essential nature of Christ and

<sup>1</sup> *Lehre der Versöhnung*, &c. vol. iii. p. 394 *sqq.*



on the fact that He is "Very God of Very God," yet endeavour to explain in detail the powers belonging to the Divine and to the Human Nature respectively.

Further remarks on this question are, however, forbidden by the limits of the present investigation, which is necessarily confined to the recent history of "Dogmatics" under its most general aspect. We propose rather to recur to what was said above as regards one of the sources of the weakness affecting recent dogmatic theology in the Church of England; viz. its unstable equilibrium, as due, on the one hand, to its becoming merged in the study of the Bible pure and simple, and as due, on the other hand, to its being mixed up with considerations which affect the act of faith rather than its dogmatic form.

We have said that this is a source of weakness to dogmatic theology. It remains now to exhibit this unstable equilibrium under another aspect, and to consider what (if any) use has been made of it, as a source of *strength*, by the Church of England.

Dogma is a necessary "moment" in the theological process, but it exceeds its proper functions so soon as it claims to be more than this. The assertion of its independence, still more of its supremacy, is fatal to the cause of Christian truth. Nor should we hear so much of the objections to the acceptance of dogma in any and every sense, but for the not less frequent use of dogma in this its wrong sense. In saying this we have in view both the wrong sense in which dogma is often understood in relation to Scripture, and also the wrong sense in which dogma is often understood in relation to the subjective experiences which are involved in the act of faith.

When we represented one weakness of recent dogmatic theology as arising from its identification with the mere statement of Biblical data, and another weakness as arising from its identification with statements of the act of faith, what we had in view was really, not the too great entanglement of dogma with considerations lying outside its own sphere, but rather

the neglect of dogma altogether. Consequently, there is no inconsistency between our complaint *then* that dogmatic theologians have concerned themselves too much with what is not dogma, and our complaint *now* that dogmatic theologians do not concern themselves enough either with the Bible or with the act of faith. We desire to see the province of dogma rightly determined in respect of these its two chief relationships. Dogmatic Theology will never be in a healthy condition until this result has been accomplished, by which what is meant is that both the dependence and the independence of dogma must be rightly understood.

Such a right understanding can hardly be said at present so much as to exist. Take (A) *Dogma and the Bible*. The popular teaching of the Bible, which in itself has of late years vastly improved, is certainly not often applied in such a way as to vitalise the popular teaching of dogma. The two spheres are indeed kept very much apart, the same preacher being often as successful in his treatment of the first as he is utterly ineffective in that of the last. On the other hand, if we consider that class of teaching which, without being popular, is yet not far above the popular level, we should find probably that instead of the Bible leavening dogma, it more often happens that dogma is employed to take all life and colour out of the Bible, as *e.g.* in the statement (no unfair instance) that "when that relationship" (*i.e.* a man's acknowledgment of himself as Christ's disciple) "has been brought about, dogmatising on the part of the superior" (*i.e.* Christ) "ceases to be an offence, and at the same moment argument becomes often mere surplusage."<sup>1</sup> But if we advance a step further still and fix our attention on the *best* specimens of Church teaching in reference to this subject, then no doubt, as in many of the writings referred to above, and perhaps still more in the writings of theologians who approach dogma from its

<sup>1</sup> Meyrick, *Is Dogma a Necessity?* ad initium.

strictly Biblical side—we should meet with pronouncements which it would be difficult to improve upon, as *e.g.* Lightfoot's "Dogmatic forms are the buttresses or the scaffold-poles of the building, not the building itself."<sup>1</sup> Still, not even the best class of theologians in the Church of England have as yet attempted to work out the suggestions which frequently proceed from them to this effect in anything like a satisfactory form, or with anything like abiding results.

(B) *Dogma and the Act of Faith.* When we come to treat of the other vitalising influence by which dogma requires to be strengthened, it appears that there is not much more room for satisfaction in the state of things which we see around us. The word dogma suggests to most persons harsh and repellent associations, whereas the act of faith excites the admiration even of many of those by whom it is regarded as a delusion. There are votaries of dogma, and there are witnesses to faith, but those who belong to the one class do not by any means always belong to the other, and even where this is so, the connection between dogma and faith is often purely accidental. And if we pursued the discrepancy further, we should find that dogma has been by many surrendered, not more on account of its supposed incredibility than on account of its supposed incompatibility with the act of faith. This last fact may, no doubt, justly be regarded as a reason for hopefulness, but it is not less a reason for expecting something to be done by theologians in order to effect a reconciliation. We shall continue the discussion of this subject in the next chapter, but meantime it may be said that the littleness of the results which have been forthcoming in this direction, is one chief reason of the discredit into which dogmatic theology has often fallen in the eyes of religious men and women, as distinguished from the discredit which often attaches to it on other grounds in the eyes of the world at large.

<sup>1</sup> Preface to the *Commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians*, p. ix.

## CHAPTER V

### THE ACT OF FAITH

IT is impossible for any one who compares the leading characteristics of contemporary theology in the Church of England with the characteristics of Anglican theology in the antecedent period, not to be struck by the different tests which are applied in the two cases respectively to the determination of the act of faith. The Tractarians and their immediate successors seem to have been chiefly interested in discussing the authority on which the act of faith rests, whilst in more recent times the attention of our theologians has centred rather on the nature of the act itself. It would, however, be a mistake to suppose that the substitution of this latter question concerning faith was intended to give the cold shoulder to the earlier one. On the contrary, not only have there never at any subsequent time been wanting discussions as regards the authoritative claims of faith, and the relation of faith to reason, to Scripture, and to tradition, but such discussions have quite latterly assumed increasing prominence. The two questions are indeed essentially connected, and the investigation of the one must always suggest that of the other.

This view of the relationship of these two questions is confirmed by our interpretation of the change with regard to them which has taken place in our own generation, as above stated. The question as to the authority of faith only yielded to the question as to

the nature of the act of faith, because it appeared from the position in which the whole subject was left by Dr. Newman, that no progress could be made with the former question until some further light had been thrown on the latter.

Newman's denial of the claims of reason, in the limited sense in which that term had been understood by the old eighteenth century rationalism, does not go beyond the destructive criticism of Kant in reference to the same subject. In Germany, however, there had been a plentiful crop of speculations—often no doubt unprofitable—following upon Kant's destruction of rationalism, and intended to show that the deliverances of the finite self, or individual reason, are dependent on, and relative to, a higher reason which—whilst itself becoming articulate in them—is what alone gives to them their reality and significance. Now, such statements and expressions, however much or however little may be thought of them, do at any rate represent an attempt to formulate the conditions of a problem which necessarily comes to the front, so soon as the claims of the merely individual reason are recognised as baseless. Newman, however, having arrived at this latter recognition, simply satisfied himself by asserting the paramount authority of the Church as a substitute. He thus bequeathed to the Church of England, at the same time that he himself parted company with her, two problems for solution.

(A) The first problem, at the time of its emergence, was of limited range. It had reference to the comparative claims of the Churches of Rome and of England to exercise authority in matters of faith, as likewise to the kind and degree of the obedience which submission to Church authority requires. But by degrees this problem came to include a more general reference to the question of authority in matters of religion, under which latter form a large part of the theology of recent times has been concerned with it.

(B) The second problem started from the assump-

tion that before the question of the authority of faith could be settled, some examination was required into its nature. It was hoped that by tracing faith back to its source, and by then following it to its derivative results, a perfect analogy and even identity might be found to exist between faith in its earlier workings as the elemental factor of religion, and faith in its later and more complex manifestations in that sense in which we speak of it as *the Faith* or—in other words—the Church's form of faith. Obviously, if this identity could be established, the position of the Church would be strengthened to an extent which could not possibly result from the mere consideration of faith with reference to the organ of authority constituting its validity.

Now, recent theology has alternated between these two modes of treating the subject of faith. The first—especially in its narrower form—was that which prevailed most during the period immediately succeeding Dr. Newman's secession. At a later time that aspect of faith which we have just described tended to become dominant. This latter, indeed—viz. the attempt to connect faith with *the Faith*—is the more mature expression of the Church's mind, and we shall therefore be chiefly concerned with it in what follows. At the same time, we repeat, this view is to be regarded as an attempt not to supersede, but rather to present in a fresh light, the first view. And before we have done, we hope to show how that *first* view—even in the narrower form of it mentioned above—has actually been influenced by ideas derived from the *second* view, to the exposition of which latter we shall now proceed.

We regard it then as a most important characteristic of recent religious thought, that the primitive implications of faith have been increasingly treated in connection with the forms which faith assumes in its later development. Thus, to one class of inquirers faith appears as already implicitly contained in the deliverances of the conscience and in the assertion of

the moral law. The influence of Kant is apparent in this tendency, which may be illustrated by such passages as the following :—"Now, even before we recognise the full force of this witness of the conscience, we must observe that in proportion to its clearness and decisiveness, it requires an act of faith as distinct from reason."<sup>1</sup> "This is its first utterance" (*i.e.* that of the inner voice), "and the man who hears and obeys unquestionably has within him the true seed of all religion."<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, faith is sometimes represented more generally as the outcome of personality, and as involved in the primary conditions of self-consciousness. "The condition in which a child is born calls out some elements of faith."<sup>3</sup> "It is faith in another . . . . it is being in another . . . . and it has reference to the poverty of self alone with self." "Acts of affection, imagination, chivalry, are all to be regarded as acts of faith."<sup>3</sup> "All such acts are acts of venture, using evidence of reason in order to go beyond evidence."<sup>3</sup>

This deeper view of faith and its analogies is by no means the exclusive property of the Church of England, still less of any one party or school in that Church. By this what we mean is, that non-Anglican theologians as *e.g.* Thomas Erskine, of Linlathen, originally did as much as, and perhaps more than, F. D. Maurice and other then contemporary theologians of our own communion, to trace faith back to its more general sources. At the same time, the theology of our own day has given a slightly new turn to the tendency in question, this result being no doubt due to the operation of Kantian and Hegelian influences in the interval. Instead, however, of indicating the differences thus caused, it will be more germane to our purpose to take note of the effects produced on English theology—and more especially on the theology of the Church of England—by the increasing preval-

<sup>1</sup> Wace, *Bampton Lectures*, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> Temple, *Bampton Lectures*, p. 52.

<sup>3</sup> C. P. Holland on "Faith," in *Lux Mundi*. The preceding quotations are from Mulford's *Republic of God*.

ence of that view of faith which is the subject of our remarks.

The first of such effects showed itself in the partial abandonment of those external evidences, both as touching natural and revealed religion, which had previously been so much in fashion. Evidential and apologetic arguments derived from this source were set aside by Churchmen, not so much because they were regarded as having been invalidated by criticism—though no doubt they often were so regarded—as because it had come to be felt that the appeal of faith must be made on altogether different grounds. In the present age there is a much greater demand for a direct presentation of the subject-matter of faith than there is for even the most conclusive demonstration of its grounds. Hence, many of the arguments which were once those most relied on, passed out of sight without any conscious surrender of belief in them, either by theologians or by the religious public.

This tendency in its more vulgar form started from the presupposition that whatever cannot be immediately felt, realised, utilised, is of no value ; this being likewise the test now generally employed in order to distinguish success and failure in practical life. But in the case of the higher religious intelligence of the nineteenth century, faith's requirement of a direct appeal to be made to itself involved much more than this. What was desired in this latter case was, no doubt, similarly a face to face presentation of faith with its object. Yet this desire was no mere senseless craving for belief without proof, nor was it complained by the best thinkers in reference to this subject, that slow and laborious processes were made use of in order to establish the claims of faith on firmer ground. It was rather urged, or at least this was what the demand amounted to, that the proofs brought forward on behalf of faith must at each step imply faith. They must not be mere mechanical and external propositions considered necessary in order to justify a



subsequent act of faith, which act, owing to the burden of previous proof required, might be, and often was, indefinitely postponed. In order to avoid this latter result, faith must make of each of its means an end; must corroborate by feeling what it reaches by argument, must convert its so-called proofs into helps to the spiritual life of the believer.

This, so far as regards faith, is the dominating tendency of recent religious literature, an attentive examination of which would show that in consequence of the view now so generally taken of faith, most of the old apologetical arguments have been either wholly or partially abandoned.

But though many of the positions formerly occupied by apologists were thus compulsorily evacuated, faith, so far from suffering, was greatly strengthened by this very fact. For besides being relieved of those of its supports which in process of time had become antiquated and useless, faith was now left free to follow her own course in other directions. It is thus that the view taken by faith, has of late years become not only wider and more comprehensive, but has also envisaged its problems under new aspects; the result being that though no doubt sometimes faith "has faltered" where once "she firmly trod," often, on the other hand, she "has trod" more "firmly" where once she "faltered." And our theologians are without doubt profiting by these experiences, not only in the shape of a more scientific, but also in the shape of a more religious, presentation of their subject, *i.e.* a presentation of it from the point of view of faith. It is true that this latter consideration necessarily enters more into the popular treatment of theology than it does into its technical and professional treatment; the best current popular teaching indeed is extremely rich in illustrations which bear out the above description. Yet it would be a mistake to suppose that the contributions which are from time to time made to the materials of strictly theological investigation are not capable of

being regarded, and are not in the habit of being regarded, as contributions also to the enlargement of the faith of the theologian. Every such contribution is a help to the exercise of faith, both by increasing its range, and by making it more intelligible through the suggestion of new points of connection. It needs a combination of the results of learning with the vision of faith in order to make theology living and fruitful. Not that English theologians have not hitherto worked under the impulse of faith. But then, as Professor Sanday so well reminds us, "in England . . . there has been more of that fugitive and evanescent quality than of solid material for it to work on." But "now" he adds, "thanks more than any one else to Bishop Lightfoot and his Cambridge compeers, we are beginning to accumulate such material."<sup>1</sup>

But it may be said, if all this is so, if the act of faith—as at present conceived—consists in destroying on the one hand, and on the other hand in merely suggesting vague possibilities of reconstruction reserved for future fulfilment, what safeguards are proposed by Church of England theologians in order to secure faith against the dangers of self-destructive criticism on the one hand and mere nebulousness on the other?

In answer to this question, attention must be called to the increasing stress which has been laid of late years on the necessity of at least *some* real conviction of sin and *some* sense of the need of conversion, preparatory to the engagement of the mind with the problems which faith passes under review. It is indeed of the essence of this new view that faith should be safeguarded by the requirement of spiritual qualifications rather than by the imposition of merely external tests of orthodoxy. Not that those who take this view of faith are either necessarily, or usually, indifferent to their obligations as churchmen. On the contrary, such persons are in many, if not in most, cases quite irreproachable in this latter respect. But

<sup>1</sup> *Expositor*, third series, vol. iv. p. 29.

though the observance of outward forms is thus insisted on and is often even accentuated, the reality of a man's faith is commonly tested, in the first instance, by reference to preliminary spiritual experiences. Nor could this be otherwise without involving an inconsistency. For if faith, as conceived at starting, is inward and spiritual—having its witness in the conscience, or in the sense of sonship, or in some other primary characteristic of the relationship between man and God—then it necessarily follows that the first experience of faith in confronting the world will be the sense, either of a violated law, or of a lost companionship, or at all events of a want of harmony of some sort between itself and its object. Consequently, this experience—whether of defect, or of discord, or of outrage—must be upon this view the determining consideration as regards the reality of faith in the first instance. And together with this experience and as a necessary part of it, there must be involved on man's part a desire for the restoration of the primitive relationship between faith and its object or—in other words—a sense of the need of conversion, in order that man may be again brought into harmony with God.

Hence, the tendency of recent theology in the Church of England has been more or less to give a free hand to faith in the discussion of the questions suggested by itself, or brought under its notice from the outside. The only limitation imposed, concerns not the matter of what shall or shall not be believed, but rather the necessity of a certain state of mind agreeable to faith having been experienced previous to the subject-matter of faith being discussed. The contention urged is to this very simple effect, viz. that an elementary acquaintance with the facts of any given situation is required in order to estimate its true nature. But the facts from which faith starts are, the conviction of sin and the desire for restoration to the Divine favour. Let a man become acquainted with these facts, *i.e.* not merely intellectually but also in his own spiritual experience, and we

are then willing—but not otherwise—to give him a free hand in the discussion of matters of faith.

Such is the contention, stated in its most pronounced form. Of course, it does not often advance to these lengths. Few theologians of the Church of England would be prepared to grant to this extent what they are here represented as offering, even subject to the conditions above named. At the same time, this is the direction in which religious thought in the Church of England is now moving. We see it in the attitude which leading Churchmen adopt towards men of science. Thus it is that one of our most eloquent preachers expresses himself with regard to the career of Charles Darwin, considered in relation to religion :—

We had, perhaps, supposed that we had to count the whole force of Mr. Darwin's mind as against us in our Christian belief . . . . What a relief, then, to discover that this other had never had the experiences to which we make our primary appeal ; was not ever in possession of the facts which are to us so convincing ; that he had not travelled into the country of which we are talking ! What a relief to find that he has never given judgment against our creed, simply because the matters that constitute its justification never fell within his range and horizon ! It is as if we, who were being ravished with some melodious music, had been disturbed at noticing another listener, who remained totally unconcerned and inattentive, without a sign of emotion on his face . . . . and were then suddenly to discover that he was stone-deaf . . . . An answer is sure to look futile to a man who has never asked the question to which it responds. A solution cannot commend itself when the problem which it solves has never been felt. A hazardous and tremendous effort at a rescue is bound to seem silly and uncalled for by those who recognise no peril to which they are liable.<sup>1</sup>

The requirement of this qualification has no doubt to some extent been due to the predisposing tendencies of contemporary Church life. That life, as we have seen, is animated by a spirit of the most extreme ecclesiastical exclusiveness which,

<sup>1</sup> Holland, *On Behalf of Belief*, pp. 83-85.

however, it combines with assimilative and appreciative inclinations in other directions. Now, faith of the kind described above, acts as an intensive force, both in respect of the Church's concentrative energies, and likewise in respect of her bias towards exclusiveness. Obviously, the profession of such a faith unites men in close sympathy with each other as the members of a select band of believers, whilst, on the other hand, it separates them by a sharp line of distinction from the surrounding world. Consequently, this type of faith has always been in great favour with small religious coteries and sectarian associations. The Church of England has been prevented from approximating more than it has done to these latter, by its larger and more liberal interpretation of this same faith, which though, as above stated, capable of serving as a basis for mere sectarianism, is likewise capable of exhibiting catholic characteristics and of fulfilling an absolutely indispensable function in relation to the catholic synthesis.

In truth, this view of faith is not in the least narrow or exclusive, when it is rightly understood. Its association with the prevailing ecclesiastical tendencies of the Church of England is a mere coincidence, and one which it would be a proof of the utmost shortsightedness to regard as necessary or permanent. To impute the characteristics of cliqueism to this view of faith is therefore absurd. How then ought we to understand faith's credentials, viz. as consisting in a conviction of sin and a felt need of conversion? Surely, what these preliminaries of faith require in order to be universalised is to be explained as the Church explains them, only with fuller reference to the catholic synthesis as a whole. Man does not only experience the sense of a broken harmony, but also the sense of an incomplete knowledge. He feels himself not merely sinful, but also ignorant. He longs for the revelation of God to be brought home to him, not merely in nature but also in history, not merely in history but also in those

highest generalisations as regards divine things which are called dogmatic, not merely in dogma but also in the act of faith, this last being considered independently as well as with reference to the determinations previously arrived at. This yearning which a man has to know God throughout the totality of His relationships is as much a preliminary of faith as is the sense of sin and the desire for salvation. In both cases there is the same feeling of loneliness until the communion with God has been brought about. No doubt, the sense of sin is the deeper and more universal experience, but there is nothing to be gained, and much to be lost, by limiting the antecedent conditions of faith to this particular consideration. For though the desire for self-realisation as regards God on the platform of knowledge, can never take the place of the desire for forgiveness of sin, it may yet be a means of ministering to this latter desire and even of satisfying it. And in some natures the former desire is the predominant one, or rather, it is the vehicle through which the latter desire makes itself felt.

But if we thus extend the preliminary conditions of faith, we should find that many men—especially men of science—would be able to qualify as having a claim to investigate the subject-matter of faith, to whom this claim is now denied by apologists on the grounds above mentioned. The requirement would then be that there should be a felt desire, not merely for intellectual knowledge (this being in no necessary sense connected with the aspirations of faith), but for a spiritual realisation of that knowledge, such as might lead to a treatment of the credentials of Christianity from the point of view of one who, if not a believer, was at least not altogether an outsider. Such a requirement might fairly be demanded and would be in no sense objectionable. It is, indeed, not easy to see how the safeguarding of faith could be otherwise accomplished without either a too exclusive limitation on the one hand, or the removal of all qualifications for forming a judgment on the other.

So far, we have considered the act of faith with reference to the determining influence exercised upon it by its original conception. Faith was traced back to its original source, and under this form it appeared, either as borne witness to by the conscience, or as involved in the conditions of personality. This conception of faith in its earlier forms has, we saw, dominated the treatment of faith in its later developments. It has done so, in the first place, by suggesting an appeal to the inner sense as a substitute for the older arguments, based on external evidences. However, the clean sweep which was thus necessitated, acted as a strengthening influence by leaving men free to find supports for faith in other directions. Accordingly, we next find the original conception of faith made use of in connection with the new lines of departure suggested to theology by its own increased knowledge and enlarged interests. Finally, we considered how the possibly chaotic state of things arising from this last occupation of faith had been provided against by safeguards, and how the chief of such safeguards was itself agreeable to the original conception of faith and owed its strength and popularity to that very cause. The improvement of which this latter safeguard is susceptible formed part of the same consideration.

What we have to do now is, to show how far the vantage ground which has been thus gained has enabled theologians to present the external supports of faith in a fresh light.

The consentient testimony of those who have spoken with most claim to be heard on behalf of the Church of England is to the effect that all such supports are to be measured and estimated by their correspondence with those tests of faith above indicated. The dogmas, the evidences, the supernatural claims are maintained as strenuously as of old, though some of the arguments formerly used in their defence have, as we have seen, been eliminated. But these credenda are not regarded as having any value,

except in virtue of their power to sustain faith, such faith being derived, either from the witness of the conscience to God, or from the sense of the Fatherhood of God. And as these things have their value as serving this function, so they are tested by their efficacy in these respects, or rather, the right and the wrong use of these things is thus determined.

Now the use popularly made of these adjuncts to faith is more often than not a wrong one. Consequently our theologians have been largely occupied in correcting this error. Thus with regard to dogma employed in such a way as to hinder the growth of the Christian life, we are told "Christianity is a present, an existing life, or it is nothing. . . . The Christianity of evidences and dogmas alone no more realises it than the bones of the fossil creatures, which Science collects and arranges, give us an idea of the living things themselves as they once moved in the power and beauty of their life."<sup>1</sup> Another theologian sees in the acceptance of miracles on any other but moral grounds a danger resulting to the moral consciousness. "In proportion as this moral and spiritual sensibility is dormant, the faith of even professed Christians is but notional and traditional and is destitute of real life and stability. A prophet or an apostle who announces a revelation from God and who claims our submission to it, appeals to us for trust ; and that trust must depend not merely upon the miracles he may be able to work, but also upon the moral authority he wields ; while this again will depend not only upon the witness's moral depth and insight, but upon our own also."<sup>2</sup> Similarly, with regard to the habit of putting the Bible and the creeds in the place of living communion with God, we read that though—"we cannot now, in full view of the facts, believe in Christ, without finding that our belief includes the Bible and the creeds," yet "still with the creeds as with the

<sup>1</sup> Magee, *The Gospel and the Age*, p. 175.  
Wace, *Bampton Lectures*, p. 77.



Bible, it is the personal intimacy with God in Christ which alone is our concern. We do not in the strict sense believe in the Bible, or in the creeds; we believe solely, and absolutely in Christ Jesus. Faith is our living act of adherence in Him, of cohesion with God."<sup>1</sup>

Hence, it would appear that the view of recent theology as regards the relation of faith to the externals of Christian belief may be analysed into the following three elements:—

1. There is a domain of faith into which these externals of religion do not enter, though we may be helped better to understand the object of faith by their means. The object of faith is realised in the act of faith itself simply and solely.

2. These same externals have no other value except as supports to faith. In this latter sense they may have an ethical value by exhibiting the moral character of God, as *e.g.* in the case of miracles, or they may have value as a direct revelation from God, *e.g.* the Bible, or their value may consist in the embodiment which they present of faith's past experiences, *e.g.* the dogmatic creeds.

3. Popular theology is constantly confusing between the act of faith and the external supports of faith, and the better class of our theologians have been constantly employed of late years in endeavouring to correct the mistakes which have arisen from this cause.

Now, all this is *healthy*, and represents a great advance upon the previous state of religious thought in the Church of England. We thus see how the first view of faith, which is concerned with its nature, has been applied to and has influenced the second view, which deals with the external grounds of its authority, the concern of theologians with these two views during the previous period having been in the inverse order. We even see traces of the same tendency in the manner in which the claims to authority

<sup>1</sup> Holland on "Faith," in *Lux Mundi*, p. 33, 12th edition.

of particular Churches are now determined, *i.e.* no longer (as in the old Tractarian days) with reference to their possession of this or that external mark or "note" of catholicity, but with reference to the obligations of faith according to its original conception, as *e.g.* in the following passage, "accordingly, in rejecting the claims of the Roman Catholic Church, we are not simply refusing to add one article of faith the more to those which we have already accepted. On the contrary, we are refusing to admit a principle which would be fatal to all faith whatever. There is a terrible truth in the saying of an English divine, that a consistent Romanist is a man 'who has had the backbone of his conscience broken,' and to break the backbone of conscience is to break the backbone of faith. It is thus that the primary principles of what is called Protestantism involves a revival of the essential conditions of vital faith."<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, we cannot regard the state of things which has been thus brought about with unmixed satisfaction. That revolt of religious feeling against dogma—spoken of at the end of the last chapter—is likely, owing to this mode of representation (though quite against the intention of the theologians in question) to receive additional encouragement—a result which could only be avoided by the infusion of fresh life into dogmatic forms, mere incipient attempts at which were all that we were able to record in our sketch of the recent history of dogma.

The meaning of this criticism is, not that we disapprove of the line taken by our theologians as regards the relationship of faith to dogma, but that we do not think that this relationship can ever be satisfactorily established if, on the one hand, faith is declared to be "back behind the region of knowledge,"<sup>2</sup> whilst, on the other hand, dogma is not revived in such a way as to be capable of interpretation in the light of faith. What inevitably happens under such circumstances is

<sup>1</sup> Wace, *Bampton Lectures*, p. 205.

<sup>2</sup> Holland, *Lux Mundi*, p. 25, 12th edition.

that the religious public not unnaturally regards faith as too loftily conceived, too mystical for its comprehension, at the same time that dogma appears to it as deprived by faith of its spiritual contents. It would surely be better to do away with dogmatic forms altogether rather than insist on their retention at all cost, whilst in fact treating them as mere external appendages of a faith lying beyond them. The alternative is to understand dogma as the intelligible expression of Christian thought in relation to matters of faith, and then to work out the problems of dogmatic theology to the furthest point to which their investigation admits of being carried without trespassing on faith's domain. From the time of the Reformation until quite recently, dogmatic forms have been conceived in a spiritual sense, though no doubt largely by the help of that identification of them with the arcana of faith which theology in our own days has discredited. But there is no reason why—without any such confusion being involved—the determinations of religious thought should not be reverently interpreted, which is all that dogmatic theology really amounts to, when rightly understood.

Enough, however, has been said on this point, further insistence on which would besides tend to leave an impression that the theology of the Church of England is in an unsatisfactory condition as regards its treatment of this same act of faith. This, at all events, is not the opinion of the present writer. It seems to him that one of the chief grounds for looking forward with hope to the future is the healthy and vigorous character of the tendency to which expression has been given in the manner above described.

The theology of the Church of England has not—except in Biblical investigation and criticism—improved recently on its previous reputation. Yet never at any time have its prospects seemed brighter, because never at any time has its faith been stronger.

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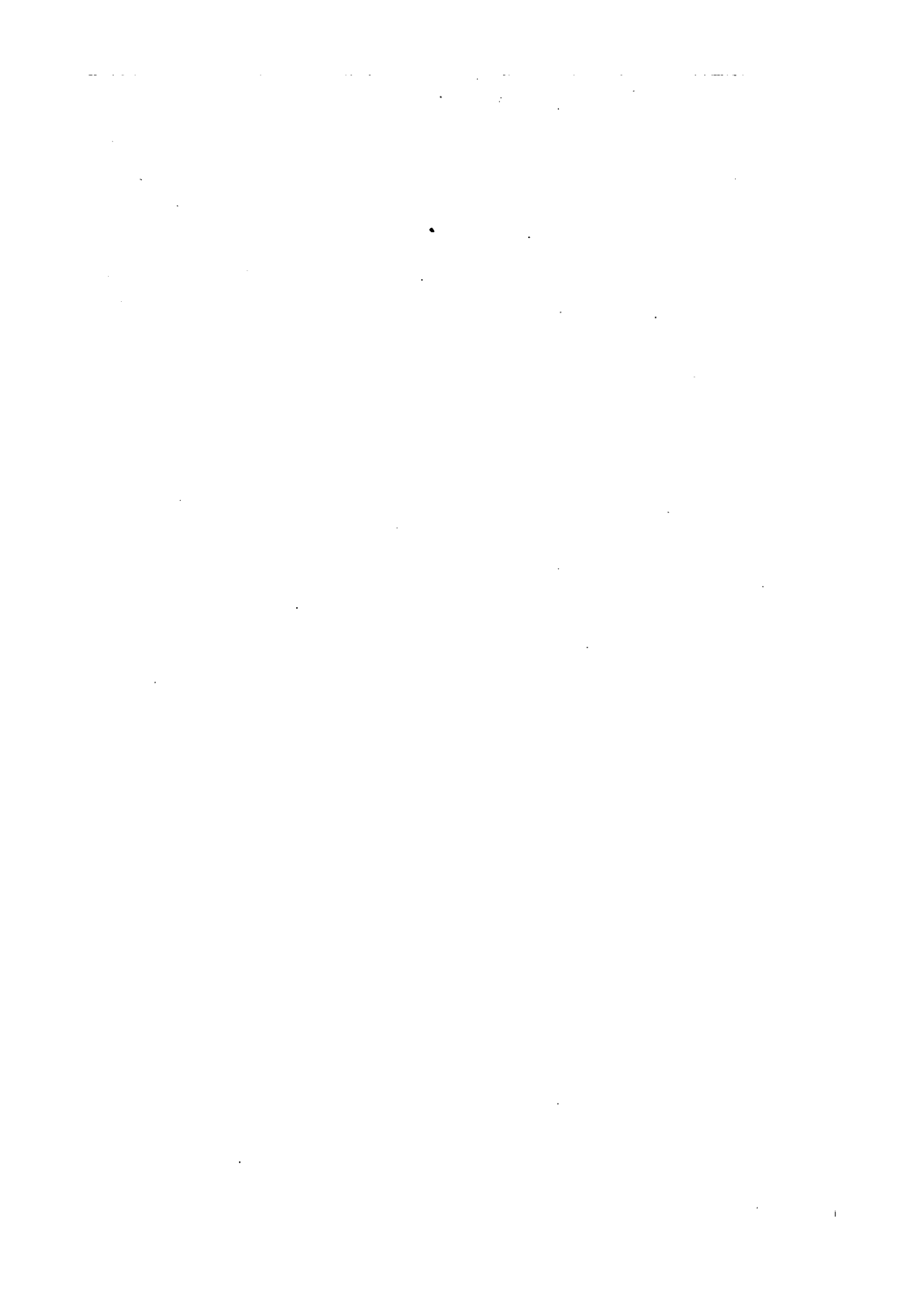
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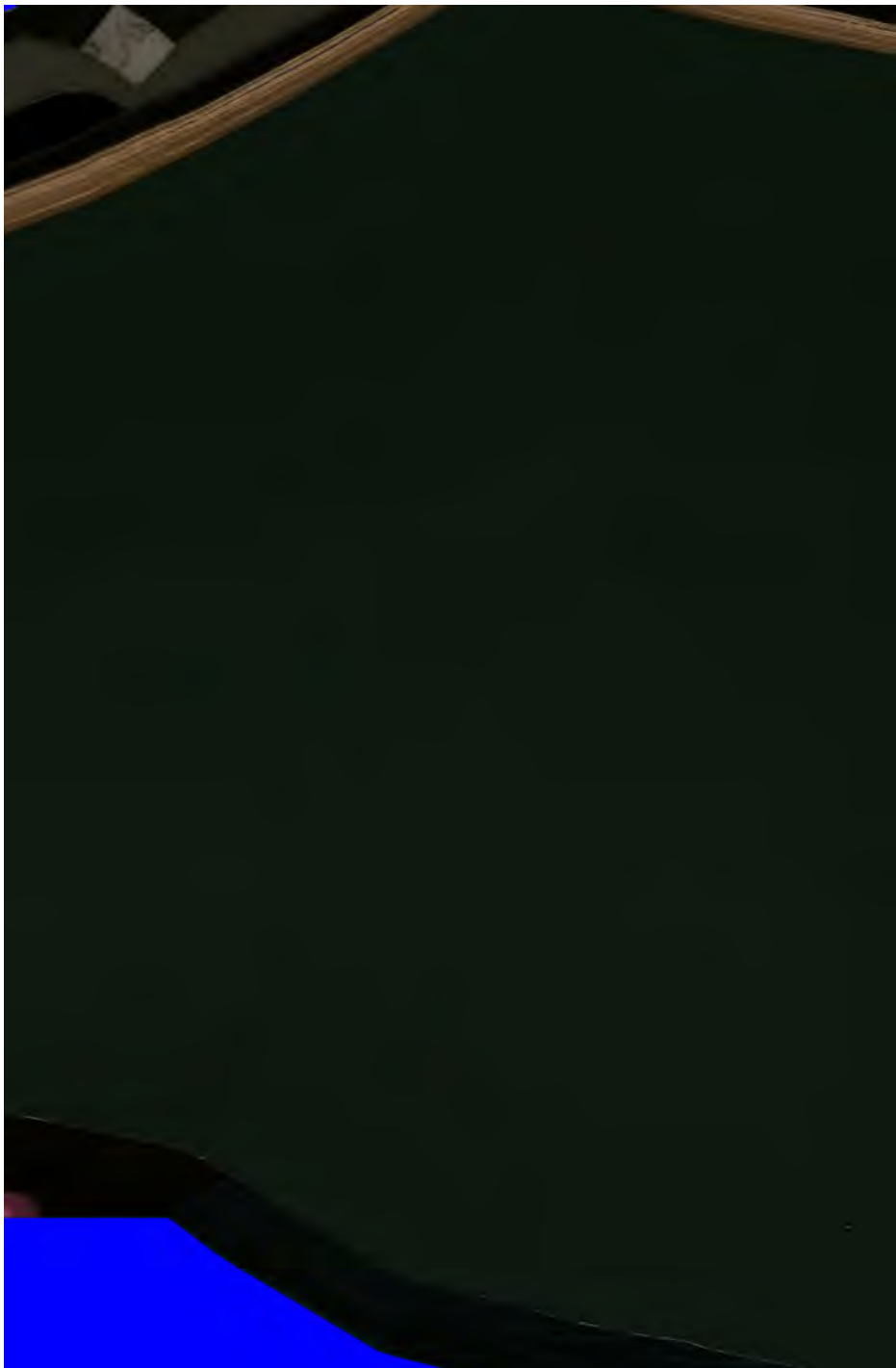
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